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Levon Aronian
'I'm a hippie now, carefree and relaxed'

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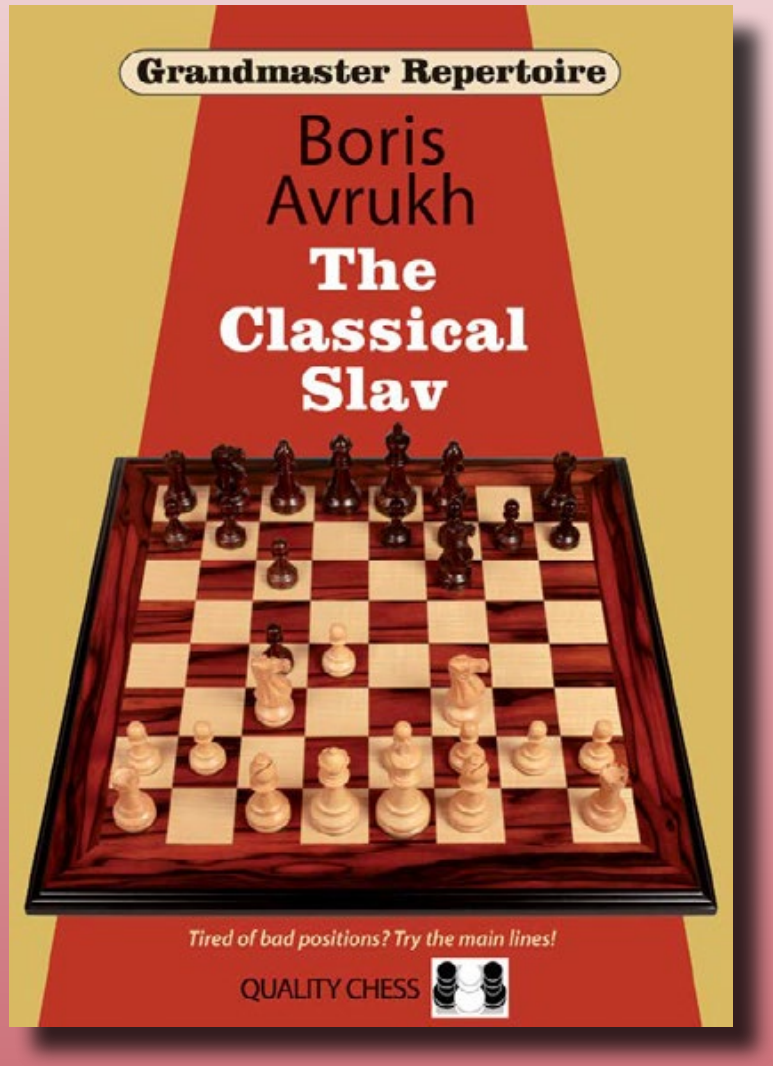

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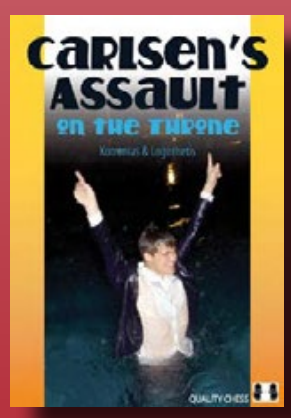

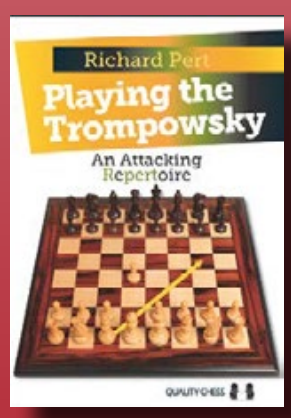

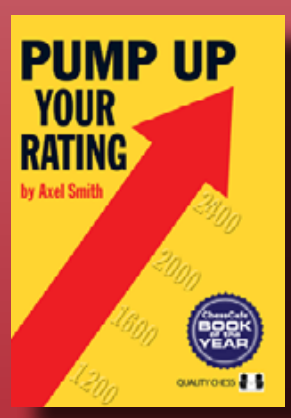

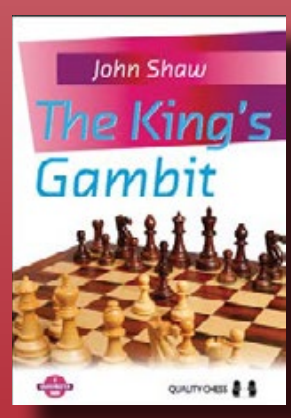

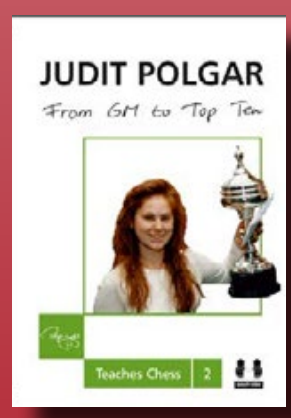

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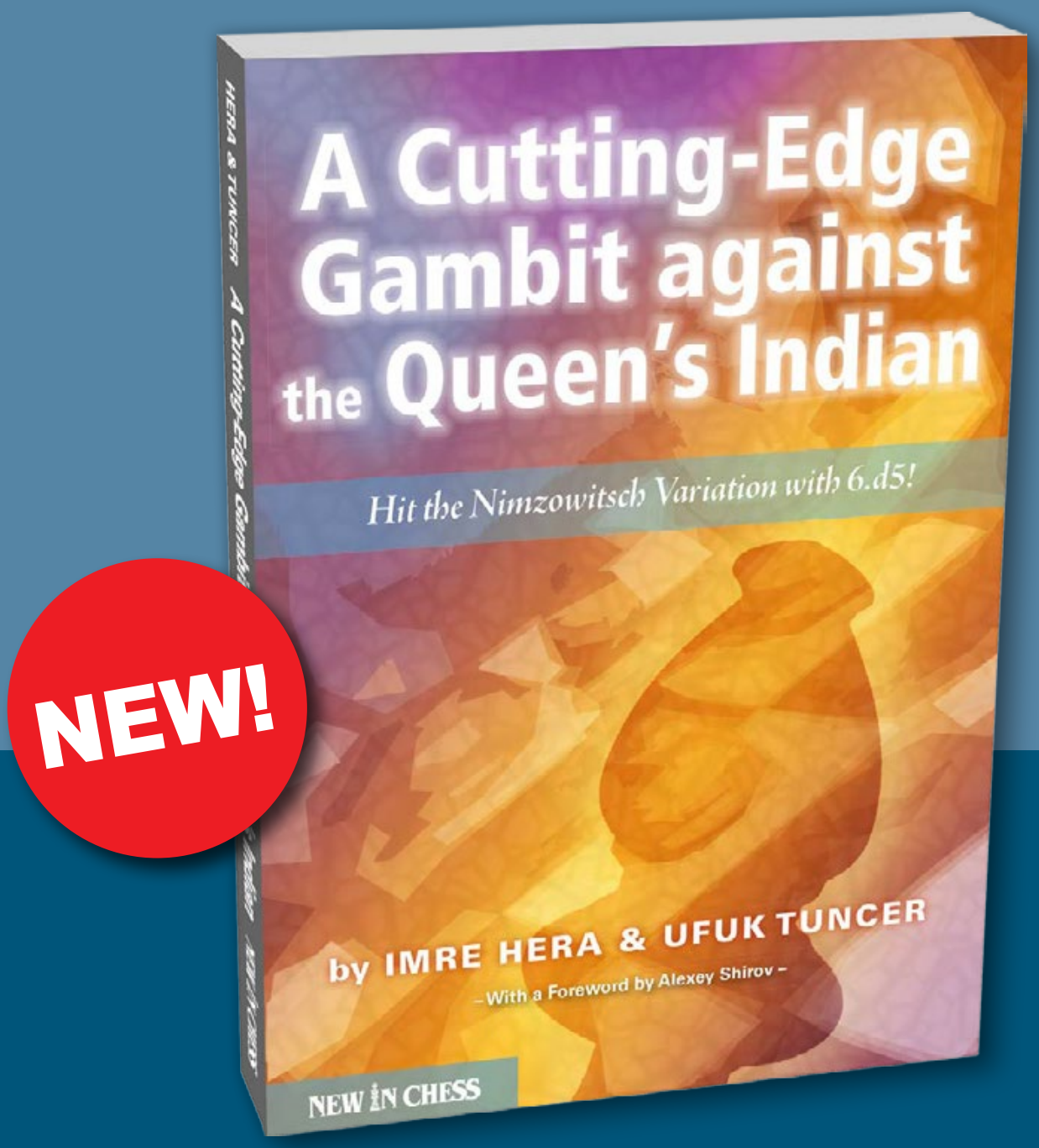
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2 Contents

Ivan Saric: 'I'd love to learn to play endgames and to pilot small planes.'

6 Strategy Skills

9 Your Move

10 NIC's Café

12 A Magnet Named Magnus
The Zurich Chess Challenge has rapidly become one of the finest elite gatherings.

21 Interview
Over an organic hamburger Magnus Carlsen looks back on his first months as World Champion.

33 Fair & Square

34 Vugar Gashimov 1986-2014
An unusually talented player and an exceptional human being has left us.

42 Agony
Nigel Short wonders why Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and Andrew Paulson would sign a document if it was only a draft.

45 Beware: Brilliancy!

46 Masters on Tour
In a mighty display of eagerness and creativity Levon Aronian won the Tata Steel Chess Tournament for the fourth time.

66 Interview
The winner of Wijk aan Zee talks freely about his passions and priorities.

74 Training
Award-winning author Jacob Aagaard argues that chess is a team sport.

80 A Love Story
Ivan Cheparinov claimed the £20,000 winner's cheque at the Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival.

92 Tata Steel Challengers
Ivan Saric won the right to play in next year's top group in Wijk aan Zee.

101 Sadler on Books

106 Just Checking
Find out a good reason why a knowledge of chess is useful in everyday life.

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COVER
Levon Aronian: New In Chess

SUBSCRIPTIONS: p. 100 COLOPHON: p. 9

'I kept on losing to Ivanchuk. I kept doubting myself, kept trying to understand what he thinks. It's such a wonderful feeling. It's a feeling that makes me play chess, makes me excited.' – *Levon Aronian*

Strategy Skills

In an undisclosed location on the Burmese side of the Myanmar-Thailand border, the Karen National Liberation Army has its headquarters. Training goes on every day from sunrise to sunset for new recruits, although the ethnic Karen – and mostly Christian – rebel group has signed a ceasefire with the Government. Exercises include extensive physical training plus a bit of dogmatism and quite some religion. But once the sun bids farewell, there is not much to do. Then, some turn to chess in order to improve 'their strategy skills'. As a fighter puts it, 'running and shooting are as essential as keeping an eye on the big picture and using your brain to defeat the enemy'. Still, nobody ever completely rests here, so an M-16 submachine gun and a grenade launcher lie idle but close to hand.

Photo and text: Zigor Aldama. (Based in Shanghai, Zigor Aldama is the East Asia correspondent for Vocento, Spain's largest media group. He visited the KNLA at the end of 2013.)

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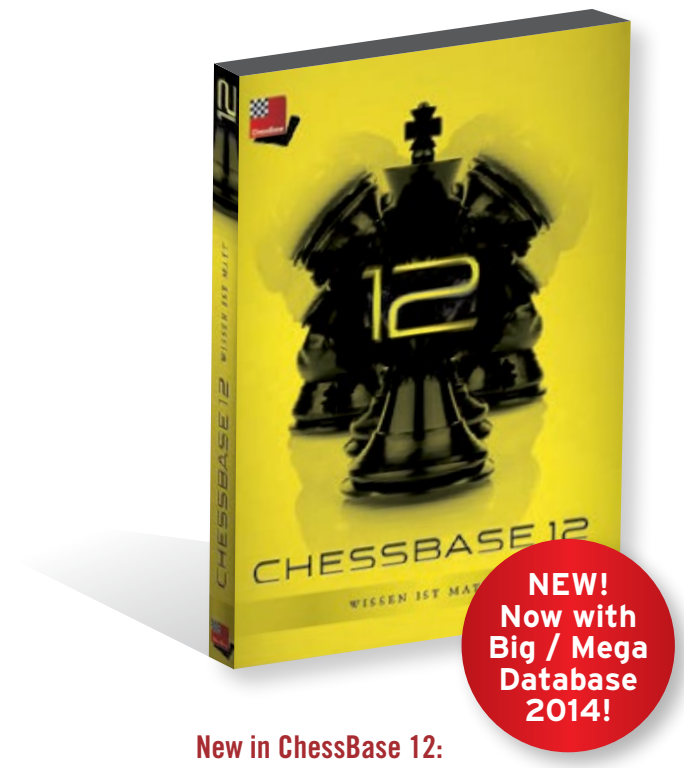

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Carry on!

I heard some rumours about the future of the Tata Steel tournament. We all know the importance of Wijk aan Zee for the history of chess. We remember games like Beliavsky-Nunn from 1985 and Kasparov-Topalov from 1999. But I would like to tell you my own little story. The first time I spotted chess in the media was in 1982. There was no Internet yet, but there was a tradition on German television of a chess tournament around Christmas in which the players themselves explained their moves (their comments were recorded after the games). The BBC first introduced this format in the 'Master Game' series in the late '70s (I still remember a very young Nigel Short defeating the legendary Svetozar Gligoric with a Nimzo-Indian Defence, and I was extremely happy to discover the whole series on YouTube some time ago). In 1982 the programme was renamed 'TV World Cup' and the tournament took place in Hamburg. In the first game I watched, Boris Spassky won a Closed Sicilian with a passed extra pawn on the queenside. I was still a schoolboy and didn't know him, but I started to read about him and learned everything about the Match of the Century against Bobby Fischer. A little later I visited a match in the German Bundesliga in Solingen, which is near to my hometown, with a friend of mine. Outside the playing hall I asked one of the players for an autograph. My friend wondered: 'Hey, who was that man you got the autograph from? Is he famous?' And I replied: 'My God, he is the guy who played Bobby Fischer! I know him from TV!' I was deeply impressed that I met a former World Champion and that it was so natural and easy. That was my start as a chess addict and I joined our local club to become a tournament player. Years later I saw Garry and Vishy in Dortmund, as they calmly moved between the spectators. And again I felt a deep inspiration for my own love for chess by this encounter. The years went by, and as my job and family became predominant, my love for chess slowly cooled down. But when my little son started to play chess when he was six, I decided to give him the chance to get the same inspiration by visiting the Tata Steel tournament in 2012. And it was absolutely overwhelming for both father and son! There was chess wherever you went and all the stars were almost within our reach. In the evening we even ran into Magnus and his father in the Tarantella restaurant, and my son shyly but successfully asked for his autograph. Imagine meeting Lionel Messi after a match of Barça quietly having dinner in a restaurant next to Camp Nou! At that moment my son became a chess lover and Magnus is certainly his hero (but he also likes Hikaru!). We returned in 2013 and again in 2014, to feel the extraordinary atmosphere of love for chess in Wijk aan Zee.

And in all those years there was a Dutchman playing, this time handicapped by a broken hand. I have known him since my own start in chess. Because it was Jan Timman who lost the Closed Sicilian against Spassky on television more than 30 years ago.

We would like to return in 2015. Whatever NIC can do to keep the tradition of Wijk aan Zee alive – please do it. For the young players, who are still developing their passion for the game. And for the old ones, who want to keep it or win it back. Jan, keep on playing. Too many heroes of my youth (John Nunn, Robert Hübner, even Garry) have more or less retired. It makes me feel younger to see you still playing and winning. Carry on!

Christoph Glowatz
Hilden, Germany

Write to us

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Keep it up!

I must commend you once again for producing a gem of an issue (2014/1). I have been subscribing to New In Chess for a few years, and can only wonder how you keep up the quality.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading about the Omani Ubar chess pieces, and the history of the fund-raising machinations of the FIDE World Championship match with Karpov.

Sadler's article on Shashin's book was interesting and I also very much like your articles on historical items, whether it be Tal, Capablanca, Che Guevara, or, in this issue, Portisch. The quality of the photographs adds to the excellence, including the black and white ones that seem to have been rarely seen before.

The diamond in this issue, however, was DJtG's article on the Lothar Schmid Collection. I found this article a joy to read, much as I did David DeLucia's a couple of years back.

Srihari Iyengar
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Back to bass

You may have wondered how serious Daniel King really is about his music after reading his answers to the Just Checking questionnaire in our previous issue. Very serious, is the answer. Conclusive evidence was gathered at the Bull's Head Pub in Barnes, South London, where the grandmaster-commentator was spotted playing double bass accompanying jazz singer Nette Robinson. The evening was a happy meeting

DAVID LLADA

From chess to jazz: Nette Robinson and Daniel King at the Bull's Head.

of various artistic pursuits, as the concert was preceded by a 'Basque chess tournament' (two players facing each other in two games simultaneously, one as White and one as Black – in actual fact, it's one of many inventions of the great David Bronstein). And those who visited the London Chess Classic will have recognized the singer as the friendly artist who was selling prints and originals of her portraits of famous chess players in the foyer. For those who missed the concert in the Bull's Head, Nette Robinson is planning more of these 'Music and Chess events', including an art and chess exhibition in Art Galleries Europe, in Mayfair, London, next June.

It's called cognitive bias

One of the benefits of playing chess, we pride ourselves, is that it induces logical thinking, a faculty that many believe comes in handy in everyday life. But do chess players really think so more logically than other mortals? A study conducted by Merim Bilali of the University of Klagenfurt in Austria, Peter McLeod of The Queen's College at the University of Oxford, and other researchers, creates some doubt. These psychologists study the *Einstellung* effect, the brain's tendency to stick with solutions it already knows rather than look for potentially superior ones.

Their experiments, the results of which are published in the March issue of *Scientific American* ('Why good thoughts block better ones'), show that even master chess players tend not to look further when they see a satisfactory solution that they are familiar with. In their experiment, they showed the chess players a position that had two solutions. They could give checkmate with a well-known five-move smothered mate or with a swifter three-move solution. The players were told to reach checkmate as quickly as possible, but once they recognized the smothered mate they became seemingly incapable of noticing the more efficient strategy. However, when presented with a nearly identical position where the smothered mate was not possible, because a bishop had been put on a different square, the players did recognize the speedier solution.

Think like a grandmaster

Baadur Jobava has always been well-liked among the regulars at our café. The jovial Georgian rose to instant fame in 2003 when he brilliantly defeated Evgeny Bareev in 34 moves at the European Club Cup. Or rather, after his reaction when he was asked to annotate the game for our pages. There was no need for that, he replied, as he had the entire game, including variations, in his computer: it had all been preparation.

Funnily enough, these days Jobava continues to be popular for exactly the opposite reason. He no longer seems eager to compare his preparation with that of the younger generation and forces them to think for themselves by selecting unusual or seemingly unambitious opening setups. That's how he won the hearts of the fans in Wijk aan Zee, where he shared second place in the Challengers (see page 92 ff.), and that's what he kept doing in the Bronstein Memorial in Minsk, where he travelled next. Jobava shared first place with

NEW IN CHESS

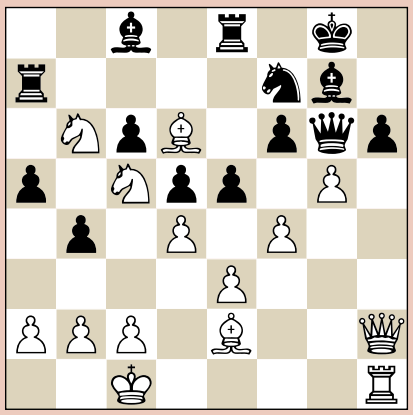
Baadur Jobava: Let's have some fun.

Fedorchuk and Oleksienko, but there can be no doubt that the great mind in whose honour the tournament was held would have agreed that only one player deserved to be the winner. Against Daniil Dubov (2614) Jobava played 1.b3 (1-0, 37), against Elena Zaiatz (2423) 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗e2 (1-0, 23), and this is what he did to Boris Savchenko (2556).

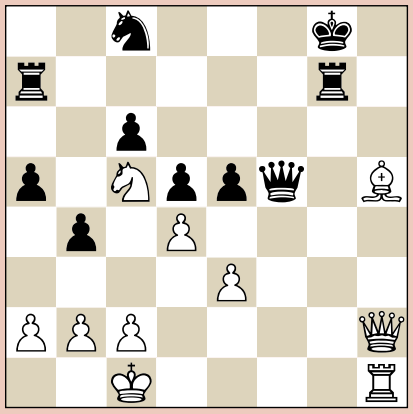
QP 10.7 – A45
Baadur Jobava
Boris Savchenko
Bronstein Memorial, Minsk 2014

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.♗f4 a6 4.e3 g6 5.h4 ♗g7 6.h5 ♘xh5 7.♖xh5!? Giving the exchange on move 7. It proves to be a healthy investment. It's easier to find attacking plans for White than the correct strategy for Black. **7...gxh5 8.♕xh5 c6 9.♘f3 h6 10.0-0-0 ♘d7 11.♕h2**

♘**f8 12.**♗**c7** ♕**d7 13.**♗**e2** ♘**e6 14.**♗**e5 b5 15.**♖**h1 f6 16.**♗**g3** ♘**g5 17.**♘**e1** There's a nice hole on c5. **17...0-0 18.**♘**d3** ♕**f5 19.**♗**f4 a5 20.**♘**c5** ♕**h7 21.g4** ♕**g6 22.**♗**c7 b4 23.**♘**3a4 e5 24.**♘**b6** Asking questions all over the board. **24...**♖**a7 25.**♗**d6** ♖**e8 26.f4** ♘**f7 27.g5**



Adding fuel to the fire. **27...**♘**xd6 28.**♗**h5** ♕**f5 29.gxh6** Black must have been dizzy by now. **29...**♖**ee7 30.hxg7** ♖**xg7 31.fxe5 fxe5 32.**♘**xc8** ♘**xc8**



33.♗**g6** Beautiful. **33...**♕**xg6** If he takes with the rook he will be mated. **34.**♕**h8+** ♔**f7 35.**♖**f1+** Black resigned.

Sweet memories

As in previous years, the readers of our Yearbook series voted on the Novelty of the Year, the best or most impressive new opening idea they had seen in 2013. There were numerous candidates, but in fact it never was a race. One novelty stood out and even the fact that it had been played in the very first month of 2013 could not prevent it from winning by a wide margin. If you've forgotten why that is, we urge you to turn to page 24 of New In Chess 2013/2. There, Vishy Anand's notes can be found to his spectacular win over Levon Aronian

NEW IN CHESS

Yearbook editor Genna Sosonko handed Vishy Anand the prize for the 2013 Novelty of the Year.

in Wijk aan Zee. It's all about 12... c5, a move Anand had prepared in great depth for his World Championship match against Boris Gelfand. As Anand wrote with justified pride: 'I saw some very flattering reactions to our game, evergreen being one of them, and it would be silly to pretend that I didn't find this game incredibly beautiful, especially to play.'

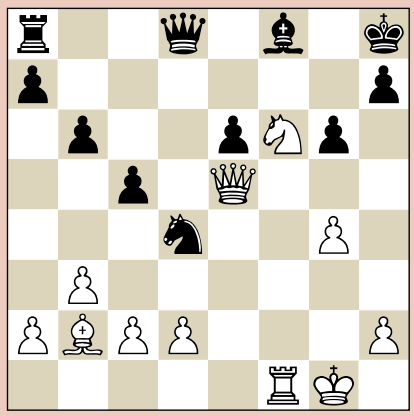
Bloody good

Few of the games Vishy Anand played in his first appearance after the lost match in Chennai made a lasting impression. The dethroned champion only showed sparks of his old self in Zurich, and it's anyone's guess what he will be capable of in the Candidates' tournament in Khanty-Mansiysk. The game that probably attracted most attention was the blitz game he lost against Magnus Carlsen. It wasn't remarkable just because it was so short, but also because Carlsen used an opening idea propagated by one of the most infamous figures in American chess history.

Claude Bloodgood (1937-2001) spent the best part of his life in prison, first for burglary, later for killing his mother. While serving a life sentence, he showed himself to be an unusually avid chess player. In 1996, using a loophole in the rules, he even rose to ninth place in the US rankings by playing 1,700 rateable games that year against inmates at the chess club he'd set up in Powhatan Prison. He also wrote three books on the unorthodox openings he liked. One of them, classified as 'mad, bad and dangerous to play' was the Norfolk Gambit (1.♘f3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.e4), named after the town where he grew up. Not an opening you'd expect to see in a game between two World Champions, would you?

RE 22.2 – A06
Magnus Carlsen
Vishy Anand
Zurich Blitz 2014 (4)

1.♘**f3 d5 2.b3 c5 3.e4 dxe4 4.**♘**g5** ♘**f6 5.**♘**c3** ♘**c6** On 5...♗f5 White can try 6.f3. **6.**♗**c4 e6 7.**♗**b2** ♗**e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.**♘**cxe4** ♘**xe4 10.**♘**xe4 e5 11.f4 exf4 12.**♕**h5** A little bit of bluff. Better was 12.♖xf4. **12...**♘**d4** With 12...♗e6 Black could have got a decent game. **13.**♖**xf4 g6 14.**♕**e5 b6 15.**♖**af1** ♗**f5 16.g4** ♗**e6** After 16...♗xe4 17.♖xf7 seems to be mate in 11. **17.**♗**xe6 fxe6 18.**♖**xf8+** ♗**xf8 19.**♘**f6+** ♔**h8**



20.c3 Missing a cute mate that was even quicker: 20.♘e8+ ♔g8 21.♕h8+! ♔xh8 22.♖xf8 mate. **20...**♘**c6 21.**♘**e8+**
Black resigned. ■

The **Zurich Chess Challenge** has quickly gained the status of one of the finest elite gatherings. With a rating average of 2801 the third edition of the brainchild of Russian chess enthusiast Oleg Skvortsov was the strongest six-player tournament ever. In his first appearance as World Champion, Magnus Carlsen lived up to expectations with a 3026 performance in the classical part. Despite a poor showing in the rapid games, this explosion proved enough to secure overall first place ahead of Fabiano Caruana and Levon Aronian.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

It probably says a lot about Magnus Carlsen's popularity that the two-month break he took after the match in Chennai felt a bit long and almost undesirable to many people. Gone are the days that freshly crowned World Champions are allowed generous periods of rest to recover. Emanuel Lasker's biographer Dr. J. Hannak wrote that Lasker 'soon' had to prove that he was worthy of the title after he had defeated Steinitz. That 'soon' was more than a year later at Hastings in the summer of 1895. And no one got upset when Alexander Alekhine didn't play for almost two years after he beat Capablanca in 1927, limiting himself to exhibitions.

But in fact, even from a modern-day perspective, Carlsen's two-month break was actually ultra-short. Only Garry Kasparov had a shorter rest after he beat Karpov in 1985. Honouring a contract that he had signed well before his title win, Kasparov came to the Netherlands one month later to defeat Jan Timman 4-2 in a sparkling performance (+3, –1, =2).

Still, it did feel as if Carlsen had been away for a while, perhaps one reason being his absence in Wijk aan Zee after he had played there for 10 years in a row. But now he was back, and anyone who had the good fortune to visit the Zurich Chess Challenge knows what that means these days. Well before the start of the rounds the spectators arrived in droves, and all afternoon long queues patiently waited for their turn to go into the splendid ballroom of the Savoy hotel and watch the players in the flesh. Outside the ballroom the Norwegian press had set up camp, hanging around and sitting on the floor as if they'd been inspired by the Occupy movement. For the first time in history a television channel had bought the rights to a chess tournament. Norway's TV2 broadcast all rounds live, with, as you will understand, a clear emphasis on one game. Another notable Magnus follower present was Tarjei Svensen, the Norwegian chess reporter who makes you wonder what Johann Peter Eckermann's life would have looked like if Goethe had lived in the days of Twitter.

All players were surrounded by autograph hunters the moment they had finished their games, but no one was as popular as Carlsen. Whenever he came out, he was immediately swallowed up by the crowd, and the Norwegian television crews had to make a serious effort to get his first reactions before he continued to the press room for the online commentary.

The moment his game had finished, Magnus Carlsen was expected to tell the people back home what had happened.

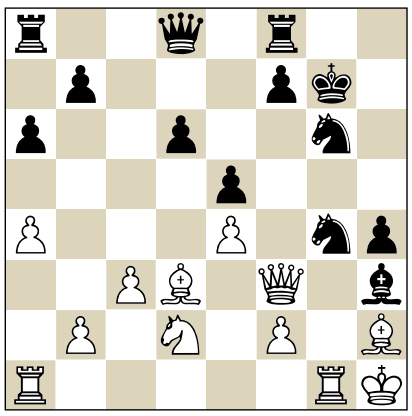
A Magnet named Magnus

World Champion raises rating to record height – 2881!

On the opening night, a blitz tournament served as appetizer and drawing of lots. The room was packed when Magnus Carlsen, on entering, betrayed his eagerness, or perhaps nervousness, to play. Seeing no one he walked straight to his table, only to realize there that his colleagues were all sitting in the front row waiting for an official word of welcome and some Swiss traditional music. Lost in thought, he sat through the short speeches and the jolly tunes and then the moment had come to play his first game as World Champion. Which ended in disaster.

SI 42.2 – B42
Magnus Carlsen
Fabiano Caruana
Zurich blitz 2014 (1)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.♗d3 ♗c5 6.c3 d6 7.♘d2 ♘f6 8.0-0 0-0 9.a4 e5 10.♘4b3 ♗a7 11.♘c4 ♗e6 12.♕e2 ♘c6 13.♗g5 h6 14.♗h4 g5 15.♗g3 ♘e7 16.♘bd2 ♘g6 17.♖fe1 h5 18.h3 h4 19.♗h2 g4 20.♔h1 gxh3 21.gxh3 ♗xh3 22.♖g1 ♔g7 23.♘e3 ♗xe3 24.♕xe3 ♘g4 25.♕f3



In the opening only Black has shown incisiveness. White has given a pawn and may have hoped to get some play against the seemingly exposed black king. **25...♕f6!** But this strong move kills all such hope. It's the white king that is vulnerable. Carlsen loses an exchange and the game. **26.♖xg4 ♕xf3+ 27.♘xf3 ♗xg4 28.♘xh4 ♘xh4 29.♖g1 ♘f3 30.♖xg4+ ♔f6 31.♖g3 ♘xh2 32.♔xh2 ♖h8+ 33.♔g2 ♖ag8 34.♗c4 ♖xg3+ 35.fxg3 a5** White resigned.

In the second game Carlsen again had the white pieces and again he ended up in a lost position, but Gelfand let him off the hook. And when next an opening experiment against Aronian wasn't much of a success, he found himself in an endgame that could safely be called totally lost. Perhaps this was the moment that finally roused his fighting spirit. Two pawns down in a rook ending, he dug in his heels and fought with all his might to save the game, which he managed after 83 moves. What's more, despite two draws and a loss, he realized that he could still finish first in the blitz tournament if he won his last two games and his rivals didn't. As pulling off the unlikely has always appealed to Carlsen, this doubtlessly inspired him. And it worked. First he ripped apart Vishy Anand in a mere 21 moves (see NIC's Café) and then he gradually ground down Hikaru Nakamura. As Levon Aronian failed to beat Caruana, the numbers one and two in the world tied for first, with Carlsen having the better tiebreak!

The inaugural Zurich Chess Challenge took place two years ago, when Vladimir Kramnik and Levon Aronian played a match. Last year there were four actors in the Savoy Hotel, competing in a double round-robin. This time six players embarked on five classical rounds, followed by a one-day rapid tournament with colours reversed. The combined scores in the classical and rapid would decide the final standings, with the classical results counting double. Oleg Skvortsov, the owner of IGC International Gemological Laboratories and the main sponsor, is fond of new ideas and wants his events to be classy and prestigious. With an unprecedented average rating of 2801 and the participation of the contenders in the last World Championship match, he

NEW IN CHESS

Magnus Carlsen has just lost his first game as World Champion. 'I was pretty disgusted with myself. I am not supposed to lose that way.'

and his wife Natasha, who is actively involved in the organization, had every reason to be happy. Originally, Vladimir Kramnik had been invited, too. But Russia's number one asked for a free day in the schedule, which was impossible, as Skvortsov wanted the Challenge to finish before the start of the Winter Olympics in Sochi. Apparently, Kramnik's absence didn't spoil their relationship, as on the opening night Skvortsov mentioned to the players that he had just spoken to his fellow-countryman. Kramnik had asked him to give them his regards and urged them to fight. His emphatic appeal 'No draws!' drew a round of laughter.

NEW IN CHESS

Always happy to talk about chess. Oleg Skvortsov chats with Boris Gelfand, Levon Aronian, Vishy Anand and Fabiano Caruana.

Despite the mixed format, the focus of the press and the public was on the classical games. And it was here that Magnus Carlsen impressed and essentially decided the tournament in his favour. As he explains in the interview in this issue, he had a long think in the opening of his first game against Gelfand and then suddenly he 'remembered how to play chess again'. The World Champion won a brilliant game and got into the right frame of mind for the rest of the rounds.

Carlsen's main rival was Levon Aronian, who had retained the zeal and fervour with which he had excelled in Wijk aan Zee. The Armenian had the better game in their direct encounter, but in the end he had to settle for second place in the classical part. To keep up with Carlsen, he should have won his last game against Caruana, but in that game it was the Italian who called the shots. After a shaky start Caruana suddenly showed the grit and determination that he is famous for and slowly but surely dismantled Aronian's Marshall.

Carlsen's ride wasn't completely smooth either, but an unforgettable survival act against Nakamura, or rather a dramatic suicide by his opponent, helped him to survive in what easily was the most dramatic game of this ZCC. Nakamura's statement on the cover of the previous New In Chess that he believes that in the coming years he can be the biggest threat for Carlsen, had inevitably invited derisive references to his terrible score against the Norwegian. Still, this hilarity obfuscated that Nakamura's reasoning wasn't that far-fetched. What's more, in Zurich he was well on his way to score his first win against Carlsen, when suddenly the earth dropped beneath his feet. How Nakamura spoiled and even lost a completely winning position is explained by Carlsen's second Peter Heine Nielsen in his notes to this game further on. For the American the ZCC was all about that game. 'It was the make-or-break moment in the tournament. If I won that game I would have pretty reasonable chances to win the tournament. And once I lost, frankly, it was impossible. I simply couldn't stop thinking about the game.' Yet he wanted to see the bright side of this traumatic experience: 'In the evening I went for dinner and forgot about it. But when I went to sleep, the position came into my head and wouldn't leave. Normally when I lose a game, I sleep well and can forget about it, but that game I couldn't forget about. It's unfortunate. I thought I played very well, but one blunder was the difference. But I feel that lately I have been playing better against Carlsen and the result is what it is, but it's certainly a step in the right direction.'

On the last day Carlsen ran out of luck – or was it energy? There was little doubt that the World Champion was unhappy about the early start of the rapid tournament, which upset his daily routine. He even came late to the start of the first round. That game he still won, a Volga Gambit against Gelfand that lasted only 23 moves, but that was his one and only win. He suffered defeats against Aronian and Caruana, and it was only thanks to the double points in the classical games that he stayed one point ahead of these two in the final standings.

The last day belonged to Fabiano Caruana, the winner in Zurich last year. Possibly inspired by his fine win over Aronian in the last round of the classical part, Caruana was suddenly on the rampage. He scored 4 points from 5 games, which was a 3041(!) performance, and it was fully deserved. With a broad smile he drew a conclusion that no one was going to argue with: 'Usually when you start badly and you end well, it feels better than the other way round.'

NOTES BY
Peter Heine Nielsen

GI 2.3 – D78
Magnus Carlsen
Boris Gelfand
Zurich 2014 (1)

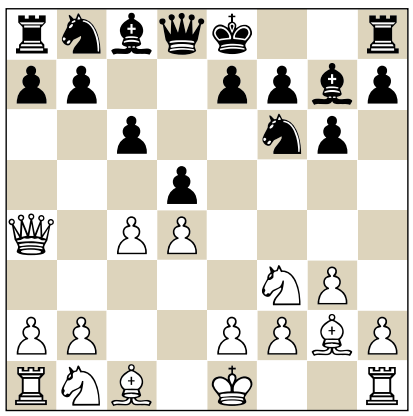
The prologue in Zurich showed that his play was somewhat rusty, but in his first classical game as World Champion, we saw Magnus from his absolutely best side.

1.c4 g6 2.d4!?

Having given avoiding the Grünfeld a shot, Magnus reacts to Gelfand's surprising 1...g6 by actually allowing it! It might seem inconsistent, but one of Magnus' many strengths is his enormous flexibility and his utter independence of specific opening choices.

2...♘f6 3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.g3 c6 5.♗g2 d5 6.♕a4!?

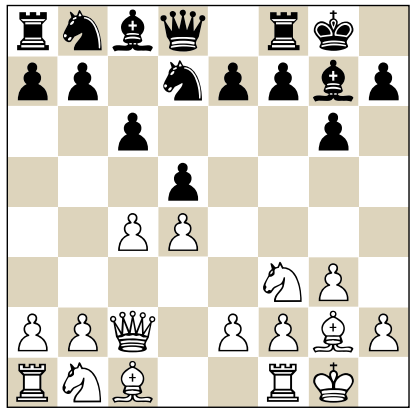
An interesting line, which became popular after Magnus used it to get a decent position against Peter Svidler in Linares 2007. That time, the inspiration came from leafing through Bent Larsen's book *ZOOM* (Zero Hour for Operative Chess Opening Models). As Gelfand has called it a book with a huge impact on his chess development, I guess hoping that ♕a4 would be a surprise was too much, but even objectively it is an interesting line.



6...0-0 7.0-0 ♘fd7!?

7...♗f5 was what Svidler played, but after 8.♘c3 ♘bd7 9.cxd5 ♘b6 10.♕b3 ♘fxd5 11.♖d1 ♕d6 12.♗d2 ♘xc3 13.♗xc3 ♕e6 14.d5!? Magnus had a pleasant edge, as after exchanging on g7 and ♘d4 White will get back the pawn with risk-free pressure. 7...a6 8.♗f4 ♗e6 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.♕b3 ♖a7 was Aronian's creative way of handling the position in Monaco 2011, but there, too, Magnus had a pleasant position, despite both games eventually being drawn.

8.♕c2



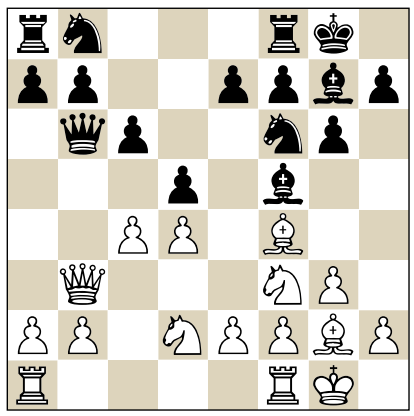
8...♘f6!?

A very interesting novelty. Against Fressinet, Gelfand had an unpleasant position after 8...dxc4 9.♕xc4 ♘b6 10.♕c2 ♘a6 11.♖d1, but as always he had done his homework and had a very interesting idea in mind, which made Magnus think for more than half an hour.

9.♗f4!?

Probably White's best way to fight for an opening advantage. The position after 8... ♘f6 had previously occurred in quite some games, but always with Black to move! But in a way, White is actually in some kind of zugzwang. The natural 9.♘c3 will be met by 9... dxc4, when it's not obvious how White will get his pawn back, and 9.♖d1 ♗f5 10.♕b3 ♕b6 is already threatening 11...♕xb3 followed by 12...♗c2.

9...♗f5 10.♕b3 ♕b6 11.♘bd2

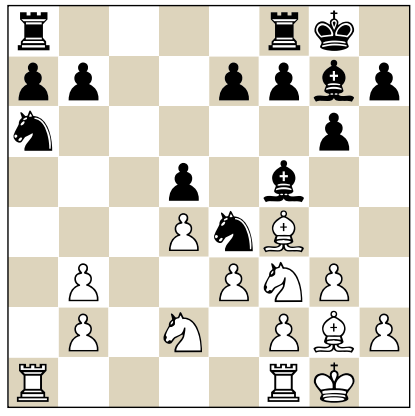


11...♘e4!? Nothing seems to be wrong with 11...♘bd7, but Gelfand tries to exert pressure in the centre and keeps the option of putting the knight on c6, should White exchange on d5.

12.e3

12.cxd5 ♕xb3 13.♘xb3 cxd5 illustrates exactly that point, when Black, due to the knight coming to c6, is completely fine. So Magnus has to try and keep the tension.

12...♕xb3 13.axb3 ♘a6 14.cxd5 cxd5



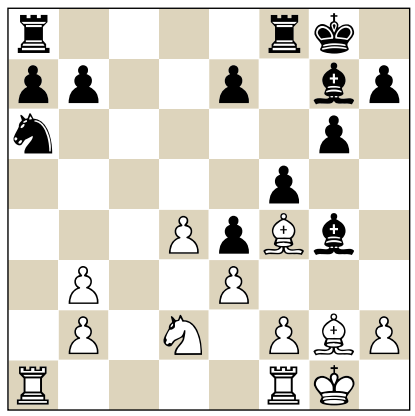
A seemingly dull position with no advantage for White would be the obvious conclusion. Quite similar to Magnus's game against Caruana later in the tournament. And in both games, after just a few more moves, almost as if by magic, Carlsen suddenly had an overwhelming initiative.

15.g4! An excellent move, with a good mix of objective merits and provocation. Gelfand, being a principled player, of course reacts with the critical continuation, accepting the sacrifice.

15...♗xg4

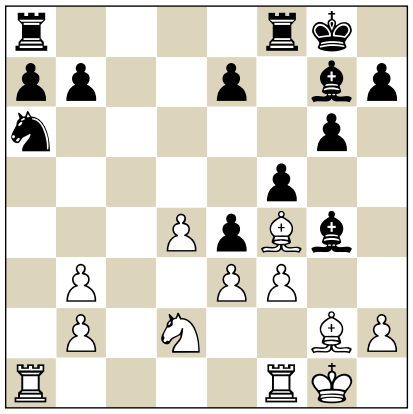
15...♘xd2 16.♘xd2 ♗e6 was possible, but besides the natural 17.♖fc1 ♖fc8 18.♖c3!?, 17.♘b1!? also maintains the pressure on the black position.

16.♘xe4 dxe4 17.♘d2 f5



The price Black has to pay for winning the pawn is that his bishop on g4 is now shut out and cannot help defend the weak black queenside.

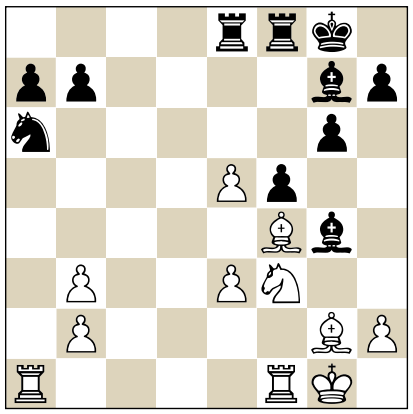
18.f3



18...e5!?

18...exf3 19.♘xf3 illustrates White's idea very well. He is a pawn down, but both his bishops are pointing at the queenside, and Black seems to be unable to defend b7 when White's knight jumps to either e5 or g5. However, there seems to be a hidden defence: 19...♖ad8! 20.♘e5 ♗xe5 21.♗xe5 ♖d7, and although White definitely still has sufficient compensation, Black's position does seem very solid, keeping the play in balance.

19.dxe5 exf3 20.♘xf3 ♖ae8



As always, Gelfand's play follows a clear logical path, and by returning the pawn he seems to have neutralized the pressure of White's bishops.

20...♖fe8 wouldn't be an improvement, as 21.♘d4, attacking b7, then causes trouble, but now this can be met by 21...♗xe5 22.♗xb7 ♘b4, as there is no longer a rook hanging on a8.

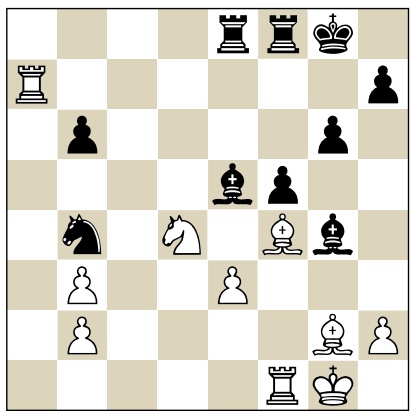
21.♖a5!

NEW IN CHESS

Magnus Carlsen looks ready for his first classical game, against Boris Gelfand. 'I thought for half an hour pretty early on and then I suddenly remembered how to play chess again.'

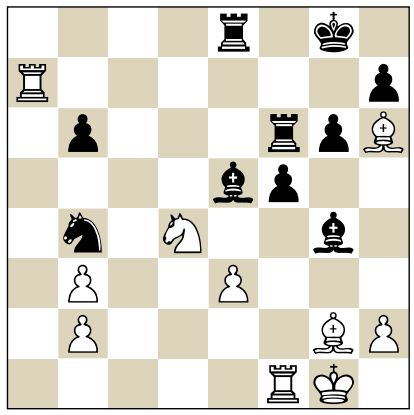
It almost seems as if White is going to great lengths to hang on to his extra pawn, but it's actually equal material and White is developing his initiative! Yes, he does have seemingly weak doubled pawns, but in this way Magnus defends the pawn on e5 to ready himself for ♘d4 or ♘g5 and he is very much making it a tactical battle instead of a quiet positional game.

21...♘b4 22.♘d4 b6 23.♖xa7 ♗xe5



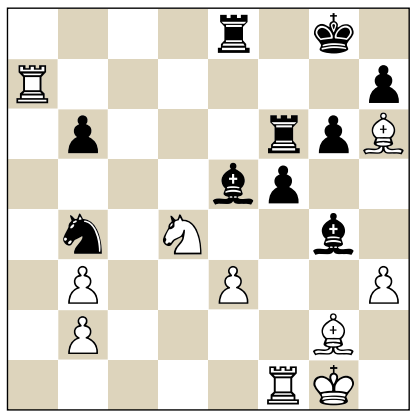
Again, Gelfand's play is consistent and logical. Pushing away the white rook, he eliminates the pawn on e5, and the knight on b4 controls the d5-square, keeping White's bishop from checking on d5. A first sight, it would seem that Black has solved his problems.

24.♗h6! ♖f6



An uncomfortable necessity, allowing White access to g7, but the more obvious-looking 24...♖f7 is met very strongly by 25.♖a4 ♗d6 26.♖fa1!, when defending against 27.♖a8!, with a mating attack, becomes very difficult, so that White is already close to winning.

25.h3

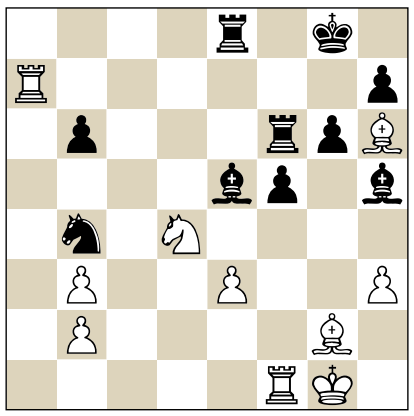


25.♖a4!? would also have been very interesting, and maybe even better

than the game continuation. It is based on the tactical point 25...♗d6 26.♘b5 ♗c5 27.♘c7 ♖d8 28.♖xb4! ♗xb4 29.♘d5 when, surprisingly, despite Black being an exchange up, he has no choice but to return it, as 29...♗e7 would just be captured, and 29...♖xd5 30.♗xd5+ ♔h8 31.♖a1! wins further material due to the mating threat. But after 29...♖fd6 30.♘xb4 ♖d1 Black keeps some drawing chances here.

25...♗h5?!

Hard to believe, but this retreat weakens f5! Resolute defending with 25...♗xd4! 26.exd4 ♗e2 27.♖c1 g5! would have come close to saving the game for Black. The most tempting option seems to be 28.♖g7+ ♔h8 29.♖e7!, but after 29...♖g8 30.♗xg5 ♖xg5 31.♖c8+ ♖g8 32.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 33.♖xe2, although White is still considerably better, I would think Black's chances of saving the game are just as good as White's of winning it. The b-pawn is not much of an asset, and ...♔f7 and ...♖d6 make for a solid set-up that White will find it very hard to break.

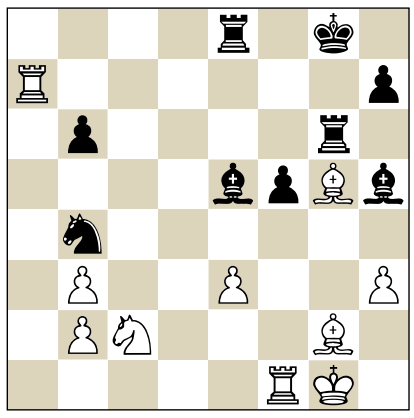


26.♘c2!!

An excellent tactical resource, illustrating that the position, despite the queen swap, in no way resembles an endgame, and that king safety is the dominant factor. By offering Black a capture on c2, Magnus wins access to the d5-square for his bishop, and the direct acceptance of the sacrifice, 26...♘xc2, leads to 27.♗d5+ ♖fe6 (27...♔h8 28.♗g7 is mate!) 28.♖c1, winning the knight, which leaves White with an extra exchange, as 28...♘b4 29.♗xe6+ ♖xe6 30.♖c8+ mates.

26...g5! The only way to fight back, challenging the bishop on h6 just in time, as the black knight is still controlling the d5-square.

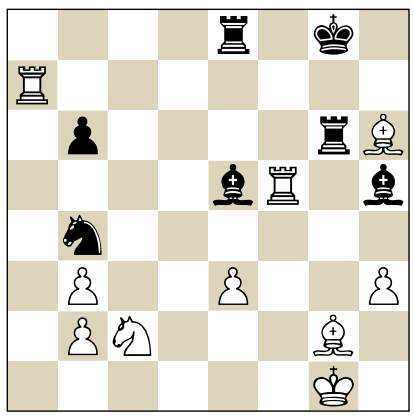
27.♗xg5 ♖g6



28.♖xf5!

This was the whole point of 25.h3. The black bishop had to be lured to h5, leaving the f5-pawn unprotected.

28...h6 29.♗xh6!?



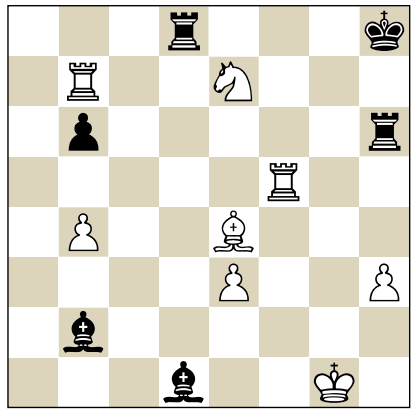
Remaining true to the style of the game, but actually the more modest 29.♘xb4! might be objectively better, as after 29...♖xg5 30.♖xg5+ hxg5 31.♗d5+ ♔f8 (31...♔h8 32.♗f7 ♗xf7 33.♖xf7 ♗xb2 34.♘d5 should also win easily, as White will just play up his king with decisive effect) 32.♘c6 ♗xb2 33.♔f2 White is only one pawn up, but he has a dominating grip on the position and should win rather trivially.

29...♖xh6?

Amazingly, 29...♗f3! prolongs the resistance. The point is that after 30.♖xf3 ♘xc2 the bishop on h6 is hanging and ...♘e1 is a threat. So White has to play 30.♖g5 ♖xg5 31.♗xg5 ♗xg2 32.♘xb4 ♗xh3 33.♘d5, keeping good winning chances, but this is less easy than after 29.♘xb4!.

After 29...♘xc2 30.♖xh5 the bishop on h6 is protected, and after 30...♘e1, 31.♖g5! just wins.

30.♘xb4 ♗xb2 31.♘d5 ♔h8 32.♖b7 ♗d1 33.b4 ♖g8 34.♘e7 ♖d8 35.♗e4



35...♗f6?

In time-trouble Gelfand blunders, but even so, White's extra pawns would eventually have sufficed for the win.

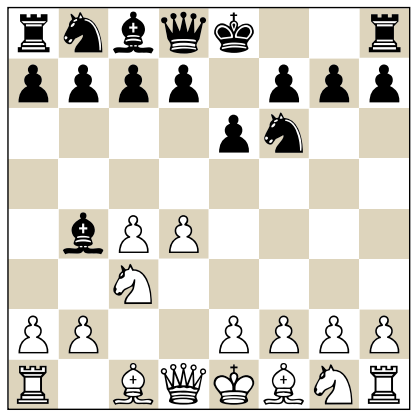
36.♖xb6 ♔g7 37.♖f2!

Threatening 38.♘f5+, and if 37...♗xe7, then 38.♖g2+! will force the black king to leave the protection of the rook on h6. So Gelfand resigned.

NOTES BY
Peter Heine Nielsen

NI 30.2 – E20
Hikaru Nakamura
Magnus Carlsen
Zurich 2014 (3)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4



4.f3!? Recently Hikaru has mainly played 4.♕c2, but inspired by the promising position Anand got against

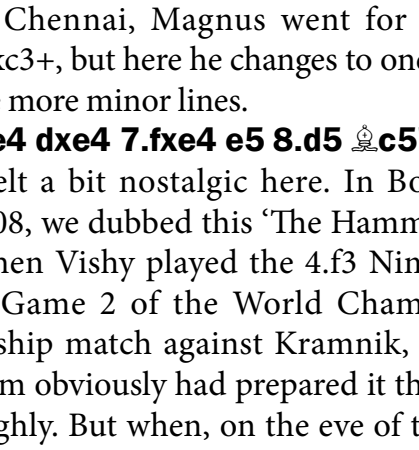
Carlsen in Game 9 of their recent World Championship match, he goes for the uncompromising 4.f3 system.

4...d5 5.a3 ♗e7!?

In Chennai, Magnus went for 5... ♗xc3+, but here he changes to one of the more minor lines.

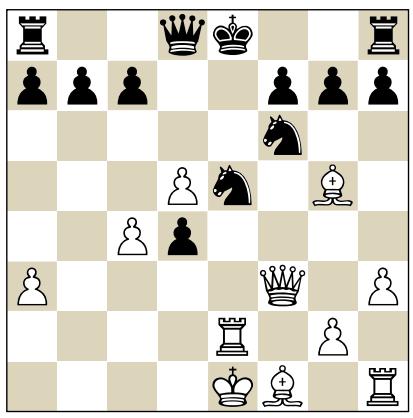
6.e4 dxe4 7.fxe4 e5 8.d5 ♗c5!?

I felt a bit nostalgic here. In Bonn 2008, we dubbed this 'The Hammer'. When Vishy played the 4.f3 Nimzo in Game 2 of the World Championship match against Kramnik, the team obviously had prepared it thoroughly. But when, on the eve of that match, Vishy played a number of training games against Magnus(!), the latter posed a lot of problems with this move, borrowed from his classmate at the time, Jon Ludvig Hammer. Vishy even mentioned this in the NIC interview after the match. (At the end of this interview in New In Chess 2008/8, Anand remarked, when asked about Magnus Carlsen's role in his preparation: 'He came after Bilbao, we worked a little bit, very nice of him to take the time out and that was helpful. And he also showed me what Jon Ludvig Hammer has been doing, one of his school friends. That was pretty essential. (Laughing) Don't forget to put that in.' – ed.) Magnus's and Vishy's training games created a very interesting poker-like situation in Game 9 in Chennai, but whereas playing 'The Hammer' there felt risky, it seemed an obvious choice in Zurich.



9.♗g5?!

9.♘f3 first is probably the better move order. After 9...♗g4 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3 ♘bd7, compared to the game it now benefits Black that he hasn't castled yet: 12.♗g5 ♗d4!? 13.♘e2!. As Ganguly played this shortly after the match in Bonn, it is not a bad guess that this was the solution we came up with in the end. After 13...♗xb2 14.♖a2 ♗d4 15.♘xd4 exd4 16.e5!, the point being 16...♘xe5 17.♖e2, he won an important game against Filippov in the 2009 World Cup.



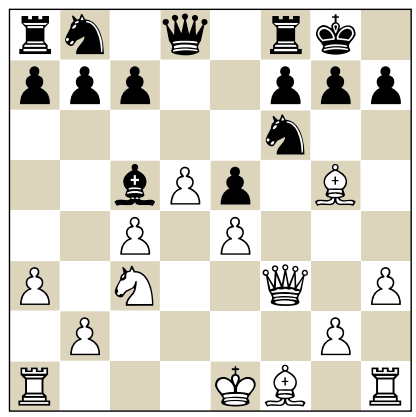
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

9...0-0?!

9...♗d4!? would be an interesting attempt to exploit White's unusual 9th move. After 10.♘f3, apart from 10...♗g4, there is also 10...♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♕d6, followed by ...♘bd7, and even ...♘a6 looks very playable for Black, as it is hard to see how White can develop an initiative that compensates for Black's structural gains.

For moral support and the occasional piece of chess advice, Hikaru Nakamura could lean on his stepfather Sunil Weeramantry and his brother Asuka, who used to play at a high level himself.

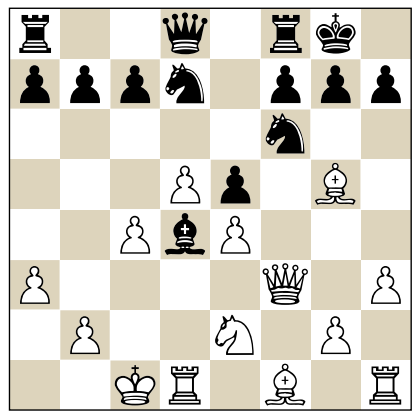
10.♘f3 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3



12...♘bd7

The early castling limits Black's options and also gives White a very clear target, which Nakamura, at least for a while, attacks wonderfully. Maybe Magnus should have tried 12...♗d4, but even here 13.♘e2!? is a good reply.

13.0-0-0 ♗d4 14.♘e2



14...c5?!

14...c6!?, even if it probably doesn't offer sufficient compensation for a pawn, looks like a better practical chance: 15.♘xd4 exd4 16.♖xd4 ♕b6 17.♖d1 ♖fe8. This is a sample line in which White, of course, has an extra pawn and even the bishop pair, but Black has squares and activity. Things he sadly missed in the game.

15.g4

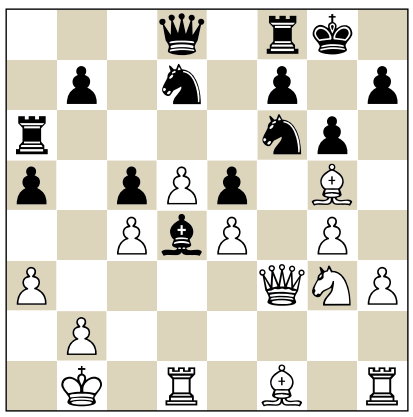
Black's position might look tempting. One could argue that it's a King's Indian in which Black has managed to get the bishop to the dream-square d4, and even avoided weakening his dark squares with ...g6. However, things are not exactly so rosy. Nakamura easily plays around the bishop on d4, and has the simple plan of attacking slowly on the kingside. Magnus needs fast counterplay, but fails to find it.

15...a5

Another idea was 15...a6!?, in order to play 16...b5 to open lines and hope for the best. Again, maybe not exactly great for Black, but at least there is some counterplay.

16.♔b1 ♖a6 17.♘g3 g6

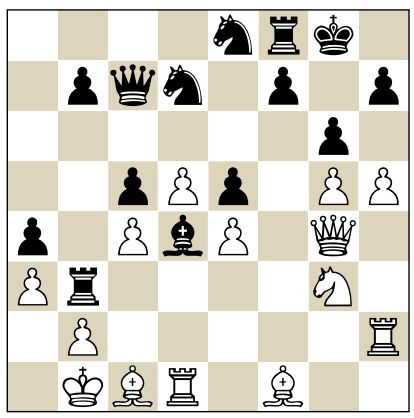
In order to keep the knight from f5, but the sad reality is that Black is already doomed to a passive defence. And while the text-move does hold back the white knight, it makes White's plan of h4-h5 very effective.



18.h4!

18.♗h6 ♘e8 would give Black quite playable compensation for the exchange. Of course, Nakamura was not interested in material, but goes for the attack.

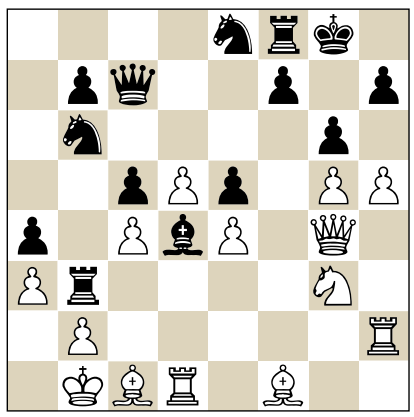
18...a4 19.♖h2 ♕a5 20.♗d2 ♕c7 21.g5 ♘e8 22.h5 ♖b6 23.♗c1! ♖b3 24.♕g4!



Simple and efficient. Black is even allowed to penetrate on b3 as well. But while both Black's bishop and rook do indeed look menacing, ♗c1 and ♖h2 not only defend solidly, but are also useful for the white attack. In an ideal world Magnus would want to play ...♘d6, ...♖b8 and ...♘f8, but the white attack is too quick.

24...♘b6

24...♘d6 25.♗d3 ♖b8 26.hxg6! illustrates why Black is not in time, as 26...fxg6 loses to 27.♕e6+, and 26...hxg6 also goes bust after 27.♕h4 ♔f8 28.♘f5! gxf5 29.g6!.



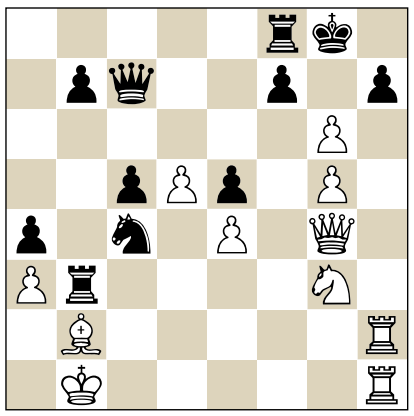
25.♗e2!

White is beautifully coordinated, everything is protected and the h-line is going to spell disaster for Black. Magnus knows what is coming and goes for a last desperate counterattack.

25...♘d6 26.♖dh1 ♗xb2

26...♘bxc4 does not change much, as 27.♗xc4 ♘xc4 28.hxg6 ♗xb2 29.♗xb2 transposes to the game.

27.♗xb2 ♘bxc4 28.♗xc4 ♘xc4 29.hxg6



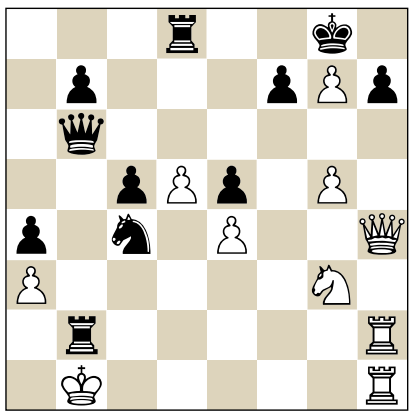
29...♕b6!?

29...fxg6 30.♕e6+ leads to an immediate collapse, apart from the fact that White is also just a piece up. So Magnus tries to throw up at least some practical problems.

30.g7!?

30.gxf7+ ♖xf7 31.♘h5! wins outright, as 31...♖xb2+ 32.♔a1 leaves Black with no follow-up, as both 32...♕b3 33.♘f6+, with a forced mate, or even 32...♖xh2 33.♘f6+! is just game over. Even so, Nakamura's move is very good, and also has a simpler feel.

30...♖d8 31.♕h4! ♖xb2+



32.♔a1!

Due to the threatened mate on h7, Black has no time to attack himself, and has to settle for:

32...♖xh2 33.♖xh2 ♕g6

After 33...♔xg7?!, 34.♘f5+! ♔f8 35.g6! wins immediately.

34.♘f5!

Technically speaking, Black is a pawn up, and while things may not look that bad, they are! Black is completely tied down without any counterplay, and White has various tactical ways to break down his last defences.

34...♖e8

continued on page 25

Total competitiveness remains the way for the World Champion. ‘I am never happy when one of my rivals does very well.’

Over an organic hamburger Magnus Carlsen looks back on the Zurich Chess Challenge and his first months as World Champion.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

The appointment is at Holy Cow, a ‘gourmet hamburger restaurant’, the day after the Zurich Chess Challenge has come to an end. ‘Gourmet’ sounds enticing, but it’s a simple no-frills place with elementary furniture aimed at a clientele that comes and leaves quickly. The burgers are fine, but they remain burgers. I’ve arrived half an hour early and already have had mine, mindful of the advice of Ken Rogoff, who once said that before you have lunch with Obama you better make sure you’ve already eaten. You don’t want to struggle with your salad when you should be paying attention to the conversation.

By the time Magnus Carlsen enters with his father Henrik and second Peter Heine Nielsen, the lunch crowd has left and most tables are free. The ‘Carlsens’ walk in as a boisterous group of youngsters, joking, laughing and unmistakably in a good mood. As they head for the counter to order, Henrik causes great hilarity when he says he considers taking a Miau Miau Burger. Peter Heine kindly explains that all burgers, except the vegetarian ones, are made of beef and that this one is actually called Maui Maui (‘100% Swiss Beef, cheese, pineapple, chopped mint, caramelized onions.’)

Magnus sits down and says he is

ready to talk as soon as he has some food. He is clearly looking forward to a treat he would never allow himself during a tournament. A big burger in a basket of French fries, no matter how organic and locally produced they are, would be unthinkable before a game. Last night at the closing dinner he had a dessert and some small macaroons and he immediately got a high from the sugar that he abstains from when playing, with the exception of natural sugars and fruit. When his burger basket is served, I assume that he first wants to eat some of it, but he indicates that now that he has his food everything is fine and we can start.

That sounds inviting, but the conversation only occasionally gets fluent. The burger claims considerable attention and there are repeated pauses. Moreover, early afternoon is not the time of day that words flow like pearls from Magnus Carlsen's mouth. But he makes an effort and tries to be cooperative. Some answers even come immediately, for example when I ask him if he was nervous to play again after two months of inactivity. 'No. Maybe I should have been. I got a bit of a rude awakening in my first few blitz games. Peter and I had played a couple of training games. (With a smirk) I tricked him as usual, so I thought everything was fine.'

He agrees that to a certain extent the shaky first blitz games were reminiscent of the first games of the World Championship match in India. 'Yeah. Maybe a bit. It probably shows that I should either play more frequently or be more ready at the start of the tournament. I was pretty disgusted with myself. I mean, I am not supposed to lose that way.'

For two months he hadn't played competitive chess, but obviously it hadn't been a complete break. 'Well, Peter and I discussed some things before the New Year, but really I didn't do too much chess. Still, I think about it all the time. It's pretty random, but I think the rest of the tournament more or less showed that there's nothing really wrong with my chess. When I got to the first classical game, something happened. I thought for half an hour pretty early on and then I suddenly remembered how to play chess again. From then on I felt like I was in very good shape.'

That good form suddenly seemed to have vanished again in the rapid games on the last day. 'In the rapid games I was a bit tired. I sort of expected my level to drop a bit, although not so drastically. There was no more free flow. First I got destroyed pretty quickly by Levon. My other two games, against Hikaru and Gelfand, were pretty normal. With Hikaru I had an advantage, but I couldn't win. I didn't mind that so much; I thought the game in itself was decent. And then against Caruana I played quickly and got a very decent position, probably slightly better. And then I was just so impractical, thinking for a very long time about a complicated combination. Really, I know this is not something you should do in rapid.'

He doesn't have to think when I ask whether he would have been more focused if instead of the rapid games there had been two more rounds of classical chess. 'Yeah, I think so. Then I would not have had to wake up two hours earlier either.'

The start of the rapid tournament, two hours earlier than the classical games, clearly bugged him, but he seems to be careful not to look for excuses. After a brief think he says: 'I didn't give myself enough room to be able to wake up a couple of hours earlier and still sleep enough.'

Despite repeated attempts from my side to find out how annoyed he was, he only wants to refer to his discomfort indirectly. He just confirms that during a tournament he sticks to a rhythm that allows him to wake up late and leaves enough time to get ready for the game. 'That's what I have done for years. During the classical part it worked out pretty well.'

In the wake of the match in Chennai there were numerous memorable highlights for the new World Champion. On November 30th, he celebrated his 23rd birthday in Madrid, where he took the honorary kick-off in the match between Real Madrid and Real Valladolid and met Cristiano Ronaldo. In January he made a

'It's a luxury that when I felt that I wasn't happy at the Savoy, I could just move.'

trip to the US, where the celebrities that he met included Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg. On a TV show he needed 12 seconds and 9 moves to checkmate the former chief executive of Microsoft. Unfortunately, there was little time for conversation. 'With Bill Gates, it was just hi and then the show. With Zuckerberg, we played a bit of chess, partly a game, partly a lesson, it was really very casual. It would have been interesting to talk to him, but there was this whole dinner and there was the chess and it turned into a Q and A with me.'

Particularly inspiring he found his visit to Silicon Valley. 'I was impressed by the culture there, how they were so casual. Basically a bunch of nerds who did whatever they wanted. I really liked to be part of that for a short time. Just amazing, the amount of clever people that were there. They were so clever that I could feel the difference. And there were really a lot of chess enthusiasts. For instance, at one company I played against a Chinese girl who had moved to America a few years ago. She didn't have a rating, but she held me to a draw in a simultaneous game and I was worse for most of the game. She explained later that she had been in the Chinese national team when she was very young.'

Despite these encounters with the bright and famous, he sees something else as the real highlight of his break: 'What I enjoyed most was to spend some time with my family before the New Year. Just getting great and regular meals. I need that once in a while. Just very quiet, harmonic…'

As his father, who was responsible for the meals, cannot hide that he overheard what was said and shows his gratitude for the compliment, I ask how it is to be Magnus Carlsen all the time, with all the travelling and meeting people. 'It depends on my mood. When I'm in a good mood I can deal with everything, when I'm in a bad mood I can deal with nothing.'

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Watching the game in the foyer, Peter Heine Nielsen and Henrik Carlsen share their relief about the dramatic turnaround in Nakamura-Carlsen with TV2 reporter Cathrine Eide.

When he is in a bad mood or when things are not going as he would like them to go, it sometimes helps that he's got used to the high life. When he smelled that a previous visitor had smoked in his room and he found the Savoy too classical anyway, he didn't hesitate to leave the players' hotel after one round and move his team to the Park Hyatt.

'Yeah. But it's a real luxury. For me the most important thing was to have all the right conditions. That's the same every tournament I play. It's a luxury that when I felt that I wasn't happy at the Savoy, I could just move. I prefer to stay in more modern hotels. I mean, I really don't spend money too lavishly, but that's one of the things. When I am at a tournament, I want to be able to perform at my best and these expenses are not such a big deal. It was the same before the World Championship match. I thought the cost didn't really matter. I am making a lot of money on the match however it goes, and I should just focus on having the best possible conditions. I do that all the time. I try to focus on things that are important to me.' With a laugh he adds: 'And I guess there is quite a large number of things that I don't consider important.'

In the past few years he has become very proficient at handling press conferences, I note, which sometimes is in stark contrast with his behaviour in situations in which he doesn't seem to care and makes no secret of how he feels. 'Maybe. But it can also happen with press conferences, I mean, that sometimes I just don't care. Then I say whatever I want and if I don't want to smile, I am not going to smile.' Again he laughs. And he explains that these days he lets Espen Agdestein, his manager, and his father deal with the press. And does he follow their advice?

'Sometimes. But Espen is really good at convincing me to do things without creating the impression that he is telling me what to do. Which in general I don't like, especially if it's people I don't know or don't respect.'

Still, there is one area in which he will always go his own way, in which he is self-confident and knows how to handle things. 'In chess it's definitely the case. I feel that I more or less know what I am doing. Then I need to make my own choices. And I really believe you need that to succeed. That doesn't mean that I know everything, but regarding everything connected to chess I think I am capable of taking good decisions.'

The world title and the massive media attention in its wake have changed his life. Still, he doesn't believe that in essence he himself has changed. He still hangs out with the same friends and they have the same jokes. 'But I am really not the one you should ask, because I feel it's harder for me to feel the changes in myself. Maybe others can judge it better. I don't think there's a big change, but maybe others will disagree.'

One change that many chess fans were curious about, were the 'experiments' he had announced for the Zurich tournament. It looks as if we didn't get to see them. 'No. I mean, the openings worked out pretty badly here. We just couldn't guess my opponents' choices in any of the games, so I had to think from an early stage. That's not a bad thing in itself, but that's not what we had wanted for this tournament. But in hindsight it's probably easier to experiment if you play longer tournaments with more games, so that each game is not so valuable.'

When he won the title, some experts, probably encouraged by his stellar rating, predicted 20 years of Carlsen hegemony. Which sounded quite optimistic in these fast times. What does seem to be a fact, however, is that in the months or even years ahead he is going to be invited to play in all the top events and that his opponents there will be very much the same players all the time. 'Yeah, it's funny when people say this event was the strongest tournament of all time rating-wise. I thought, really? It's probably true, but it's also hard for me to judge, because these are the people I play all the time. Apart from Kramnik, everyone was here. It would be interesting to play some more mixed tournaments. At some point, when you play the same players all the time, it gets a bit boring.'

'When I'm in a good mood I can deal with everything, when I'm in a bad mood I can deal with nothing.'

NEW IN CHESS

Another worry may be a lack of real rivals. In that sense he must have been happy with Levon Aronian's recent performances. 'I wouldn't say that I was happy. He is clearly playing at a strong level right now. I could feel that when I was playing him in the classical game, that he thinks about chess at a high level. He'd certainly be an interesting opponent, both in a match and also in the upcoming tournaments. But I am never happy when one of my rivals does very well. I want the games to be interesting, but I still want to win by a large margin.'

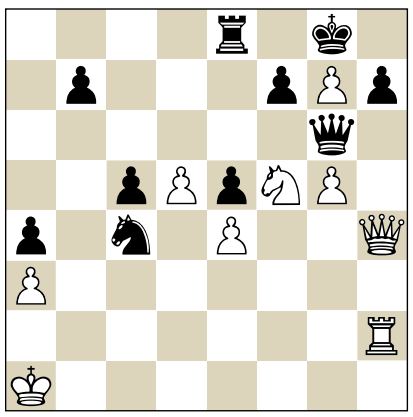
Another competition that will have his interest are the upcoming FIDE presidential elections, if only for the impact they will have on the world championship cycle and the next title match. Does he have a clear preference? 'I think Garry has some good ideas. But we'll see how it develops. I mean, now there's a big mess, but I guess that to win an election like this you probably have to make some sacrifices, moral sacrifices even maybe. I don't know. But I hope in any case that there will be a better procedure for the elections than last time.'

And a better bidding procedure for the next world championship match? 'We'll see what happens. At this point I don't really know. Espen probably knows a bit more. But I learned that as the World Champion I can attend the presidential board meetings, so maybe that's what I am going to do at some point.'

What else can you do as World Champion? He smiles, happy with the answer that is coming: 'I think that's about it.'

Besides, my time is up. A gentleman from Spain sits waiting at another table. He wants to briefly show Magnus some special features of the Cristiano Ronaldo fan site for which he has agreed to do an interview that will be filmed in the weeks to come. Next, the Carlsens have a flight to catch to Oslo and Peter Heine Nielsen a train to Baden-Baden, where he is going for the Bundesliga. I'm also headed for the airport and am invited to share the taxi Henrik has ordered. As the car drives off, we suddenly pass Peter Heine Nielsen, who left a bit earlier. He's walking on the other side of the street, tugging a big suitcase. Magnus doesn't hesitate a moment and with a broad grin he rolls down the window and shouts in Norwegian: 'Hey, Danish…!' The last word I didn't catch, but there is little doubt that it was not fit to print. Both laugh, displaying the same camaraderie with which they arrived at Holy Cow. That, in any case, didn't sound like a Magnus Carlsen who had changed a lot. ■

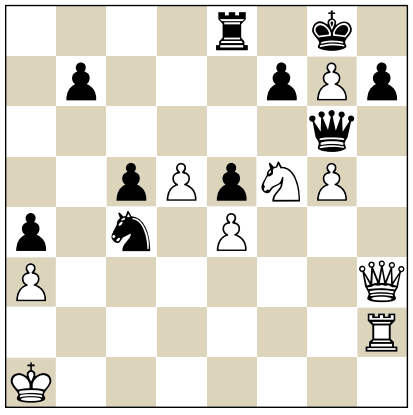
continued from page 20



35.♕g4

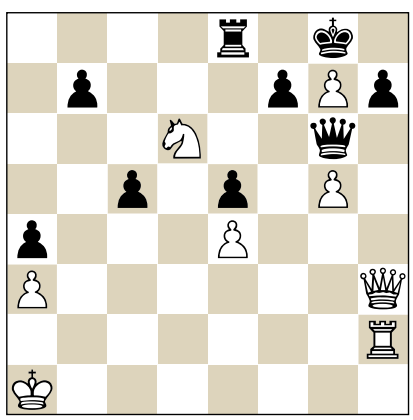
35.♕f2! would have ended things here and now. 35...♕xg5 loses on the spot to 36.♘h6+, but more importantly, 35...b6 36.♖xh7! finishes Black off in style and would have crowned Nakamura's efforts: 36...♕xh7 (36...♔xh7 37.♕h4+ just mates) 37.♘h6 ♔xg7 38.♕xf7+ ♔h8 39.♕xe8+ ♔g7 40.♕f7+ ♔h8 41.♕f8+!, with mate next move.

35...♕b6 36.♕h3 ♕g6



37.d6?? A tragic blunder. Winning was 37.♕f1!, analogous to the previous line, as 37...b5 38.♖xh7! works here too. But 37.♕h4!? also has its charm, as after 37...b6 or 37...b5, 38.d6! is indeed decisive now, as Black lacks the important check on b6.

37...♘xd6 38.♘xd6



38...♖d8! A dramatic turnaround. Nakamura had planned 39.♘f5, 'winning', but now realized that after 39...♖d1+ 40.♔b2 ♕b6+ 41.♔a2 Black does not play 41...♕b3+, as that square is protected by the queen on h3, but 41...♕b1 mate! And after 40.♔a2 Black has 40...♕e6+!.

39.♘c4?!

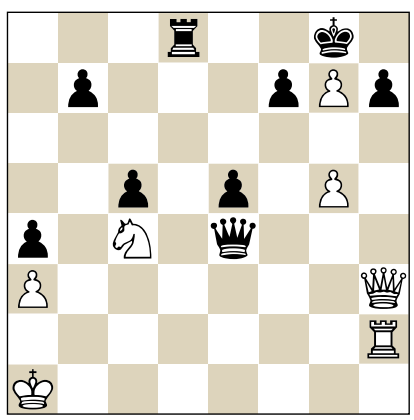
39.♘c8! is better, and leaves White still better, although after 39...♔xg7 40.♘e7 ♖d1+ 41.♔a2 ♕e6+ 42.♕xe6 fxe6 43.♖h6, while White is still pressing, at least Black has realistic hopes of survival. Already a major improvement for Magnus, but soon things will get much much better for him.

39...♕xe4

Suddenly it is Nakamura who has to play accurately just to hold the draw.

'Visibly upset, with his clock ticking down, Hikaru did not manage to calculate the lines precisely or get a hold of himself.'

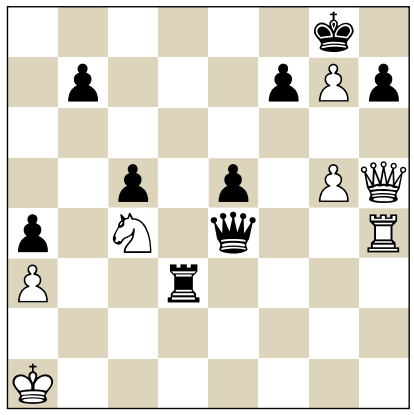
Visibly upset, with his clock ticking down, Hikaru did not manage to calculate the lines precisely or get a hold of himself. Instead of at least saving what could be saved, he kept chasing the dream of getting what seemed already his, for just one move too long:



40.♕h5??

40.♘e3! ♕d3 41.♘f5! saves the draw, as now due to the mating threat on h7, Black has to attack, but after 41...♕d1+ 42.♔a2 only 42...♖d2+ with a perpetual is available.

40...♖d3! 41.♖h4



41...♕f5!

This is not exactly a good game by Magnus, but one has to hand it to him that when offered a chance, he does exploit it very well. White no longer has an attack and it's the white king that feels unsafe.

42.♕e2 b5 43.♘d2 ♕xg5

It was even possible to take the pawn on a3, and after 44.♔b2 to play 44...♖g3!, but Magnus keeps it simple.

44.♕xd3 ♕xh4 45.♘e4 ♔xg7

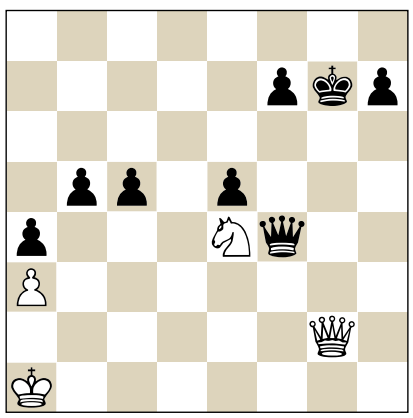
The pawn on g7 added some security to the black king when White was attacking, but now things are different, and as Black's many pawns are

Zurich 2014 (classical) — cat. XXIII

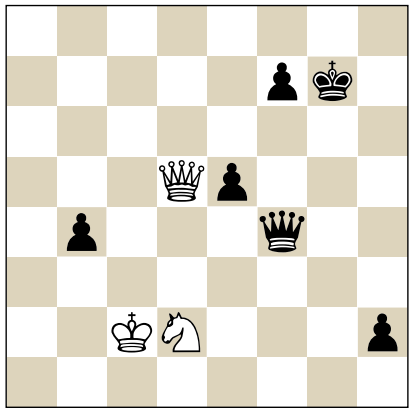
				1	2	3	4	5	6		TPR
1 Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2872	*	½	1	½	1	1	8	3027
2 Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2812	½	*	0	1	1	½	6	2871
3 Fabiano Caruana	IGM	ITA	2782	0	1	*	½	½	½	5	2805
4 Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2773	½	0	½	*	0	1	4	2734
5 Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2789	0	0	½	1	*	½	4	2731
6 Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR	2777	0	½	½	0	½	*	3	2657

2 points for a win, 1 for a draw

basically decisive, White's only chance is perpetual check. To avoid that some air for the black king is needed.
46.♕f3 ♕f4! 47.♕g2+



47...♔f8!
Now the black king is safe and he can start marching up the h-pawn. White is not only lost, but also hardly has any way of putting up a few tricks.
48.♔b2 h5! 49.♘d2 h4 50.♔c2 b4 51.axb4 cxb4 52.♕a8+ ♔g7 53.♕xa4 h3 54.♕b3 h2 55.♕d5

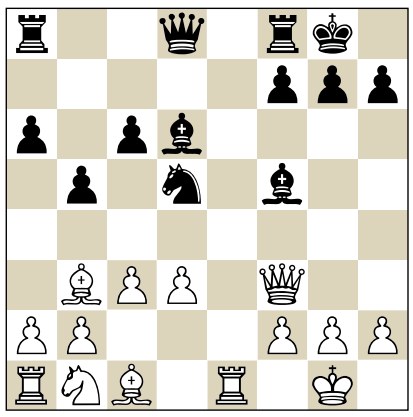


55...e4!
A final bit of precision. If 56.♕d4+, then 56...♕f6, as 57.♕xe4 ♕g6! wins.
56.♕h5 e3 57.♘f3 e2 58.♔b3 f6 59.♘e1
59.♔c2 ♕xf3! would have been a pretty finish as 60.♕xf3 e1♘+ forks the queen and then the h-pawn queens.
59...♕g3+ 60.♔a4 ♕g1 61.♕xe2 ♕a7+
Avoiding even the slightest complications after 61...h1♕ 62.♕e7+. Here Nakamura resigned, obviously and rightfully disappointed. But one thing is certainly a fact, he did give Magnus quite a scare.

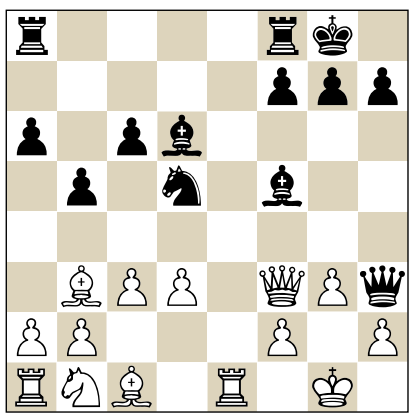
NOTES BY
Fabiano Caruana

RL 17.4 – C89
Fabiano Caruana
Levon Aronian
Zurich 2014 (5)

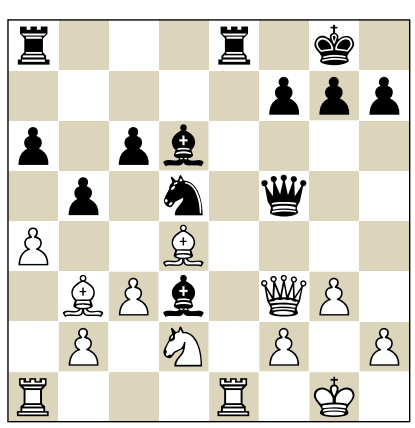
Before this game, the tournament hadn't been going well for me. I had missed a lot of chances and the previous day I had lost a terrible game to Carlsen. But unless you're stranded in the Indian Ocean, all is not lost!
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.c3 d5
The Marshall has been one of the toughest nuts to crack in modern chess. Players (myself included) have tried nearly every move here, but for this game I decided to play in the most principled way.
9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♘xe5 ♘xe5 11.♖xe5 c6 12.d3 ♗d6 13.♖e1 ♗f5 14.♕f3



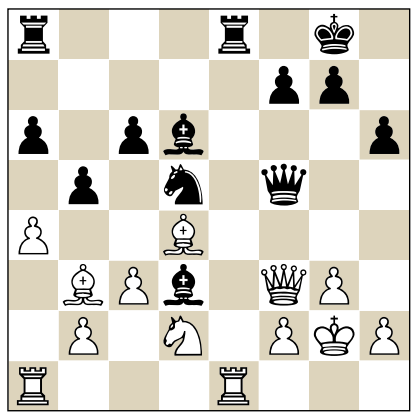
14...♕h4 Last year Kasimdzhanov played 14...♕f6 against me, but I also got a slight advantage there.
15.g3 ♕h3



16.♗e3
Not a new move, but a rare one. Levon had faced this before, and easily held a draw, but I felt that Black would still have some problems to solve.
16.♗xd5 cxd5 17.♕xd5 is the main line, with an enormous body of theory.
16...♗xd3 17.♘d2 ♕f5 18.♗d4
Ivanchuk opted for the queen trade right away, which makes less sense to me.
18...♖fe8 19.a4



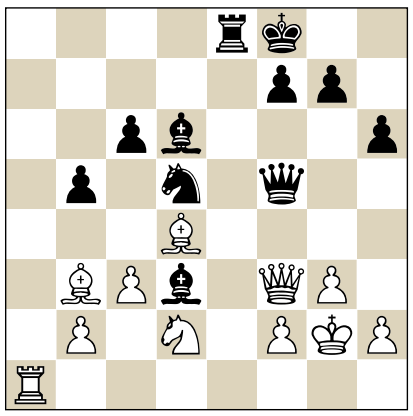
19...h6
A slightly mysterious move, which Levon played very quickly. I wasn't surprised, because it's the first line of Houdini and one of the moves I had checked.
Neither side wants to release the tension by trading queens. For example, 19...♕xf3?! 20.♘xf3 would give White an advantage because a knight or bishop can land on e5.
20.♔g2
Just a useful waiting move.



20...♔f8
This came as a surprise to me.
If Black tries to force matters, for instance with 20...b4, he might

become worse: 21.c4 c5 22.♕xd5 ♕xd5+ 23.cxd5 cxd4 24.♘c4 ♗xc4 25.♗xc4, and rather instructively, this ending is extremely unpleasant for Black, mainly because his pawn is on b4, which leaves the bishop on d6 obstructed and vulnerable to ♖c6.

21.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 22.axb5 axb5



NEW IN CHESS

Fabiano Caruana: 'I had missed a lot of chances and the previous day I had lost a terrible game to Carlsen. But unless you're stranded in the Indian Ocean, all is not lost!'

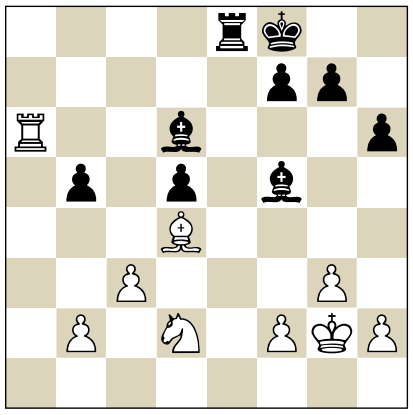
23.♕xf5

Too compliant. I spent a lot of time on these moves, because I felt it was the critical moment, but I couldn't find a clear path to an advantage.

23.♖a6!, my first intention, was the right way: 23...♘e7 24.♗d1!. A very important move, which I saw, but rejected based on 24...♕g6, overlooking that I can continue chasing the queen: 25.♕g4!, and White's advantage becomes obvious.

23...♗xf5 24.♗xd5 cxd5 25.♖a6

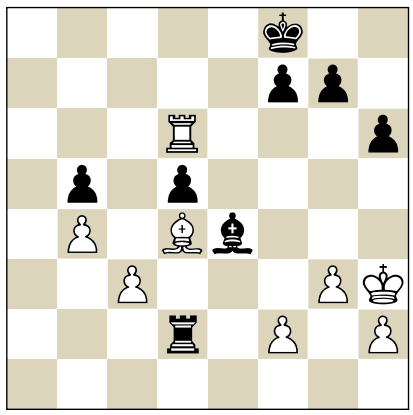
White's advantage looks miniscule, but I remember analysing similar positions and concluding that there are some dangers for Black.



25...♗e7?!

This doesn't look entirely accurate.

25...♖e2! was the best move and the one I expected during the game: 26.♖xd6 (26.♗e3 ♔e7 27.♖a1 traps the rook, but it can never be won because ...♗d3 defends everything. I don't recommend the shameless pawn grab with 26.♘f3 ♔e7 27.♗xg7 ♗e4) 26...♖xd2 27.b4. I thought White would have an advantage here, but it turns out Black gets counterplay against my king: 27...♗e4+ 28.♔h3



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

28...f5!! (an incredibly strong move, courtesy of Houdini) 29.♖g6 (29.♖b6 g5 30.♖xh6 ♗d3 31.♔g2 ♗e4+ is a draw; 29.♖d8+ ♔e7 30.♖h8 ♔f7 31.♖h7 ♖xd4 32.cxd4 ♔g8 is a funny line. If you didn't know the previous moves it would be hard to figure out how the rook got to h7!) 29...♖d1! (29...f4 30.♖b6). Getting the rook out of the attack from ♗xh6. Now White can't capture on g7 and 30.♖b6 g5 again leads to a draw.

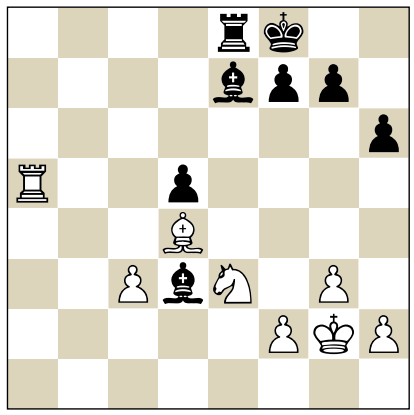
26.♘f1 The machine shows its weakness here, preferring 26.♖b6 ♗g5 27.♘f3 ♗e4 28.♖xb5, which wins a pawn but allows an eternal pin on the knight. I was worried I might get worse here.

26...b4 Black takes his chance to trade off his weak b-pawn. Nevertheless, White keeps some advantage.

27.♘e3 ♗d3

27...♗e6 28.f4, and White can start to expand on the kingside. Black has no counterplay.

28.♖a5 bxc3 29.bxc3



29...♗d8 Levon was very upset about this move after the game. Although it's not very accurate, I don't think it was the main cause for Black's defeat.

30.♖a8 f6 31.f3 ♗e7 32.♖a7 ♗d6 33.♖d7 ♗a3 34.♖xd5 ♔g8 35.h4 ♗c1

"A very good and honest opening book with serious and deep analysis. The many novelties and new ideas make this system a weapon against the Caro-Kann that one should not underestimate."
Martin Rieger SchachWelt

"*The Extreme Caro-Kann* effectively takes Black out of his comfort zone, which isn't an easy task against this defence (..) The exercise section is a bonus. I think that it is a great idea to encourage the reader to be ready to seize any tactical opportunities that arise in his games (..) It is definitively an entertaining read. Overall an excellent book from Bezgodov. The author has certainly persuaded me that 3.f3 is more than just a surprise weapon. So Caro-Kann practitioners should get hold of this book before their future opponents do!"
GM Glenn Flear, author of 'Starting Out: Open Games'

♦

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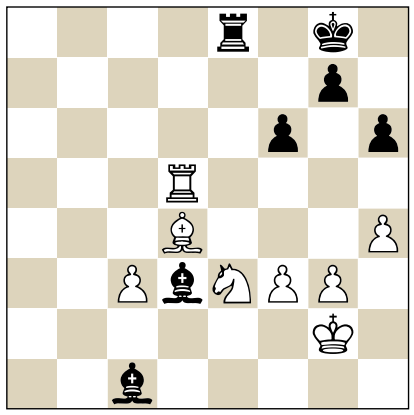
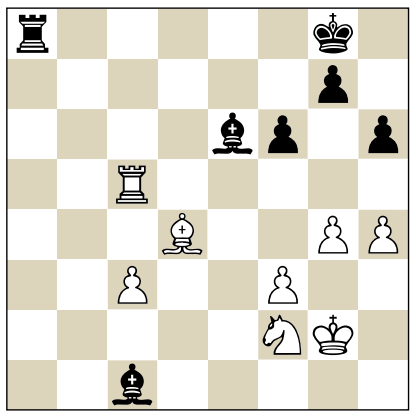
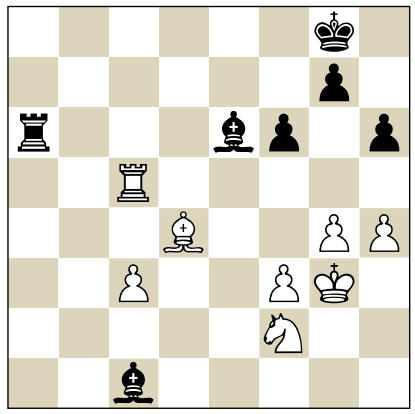


36.♘g4 I felt my chances to win wouldn't be so high if I allowed the trade: 36.♔f2 ♗xe3+ 37.♗xe3 ♗c4 38.♖c5 ♗e6 looks very drawish.
36...♗c4 37.♖c5 ♗e6
It made more sense to get the rook to the 2nd immediately: 37...♖e2+ 38.♘f2 (38.♔f1 ♗a6) 38...♗e6.
38.♘f2 ♖a8 39.g4

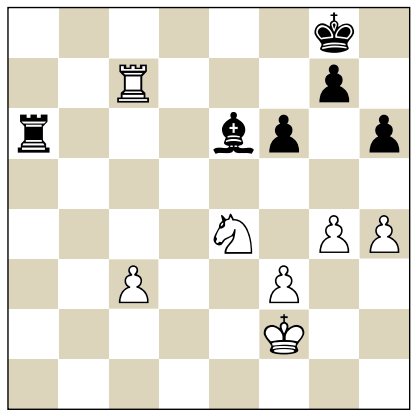


39...♖a2? This move, made extremely quickly, shocked me. Levon started to play poorly over the next few moves, despite the fact that his position is perfectly fine.
39...♗f4!, preventing 40.♔g3, was necessary: 40.♘d3 ♖a2+ 41.♗f2 ♗e3 42.♖c6 (42.♖c7 ♖d2) 42...♗d7 43.♖c7 ♖d2 44.♖xd7 ♗xf2 45.♔h3 ♗e3, and Black gets enough counterplay to make a draw.
40.♔g3

Suddenly, my king is free and Black is in serious trouble. The bishop on c1 is especially poorly placed.
40...♖a6



41.♖c7 A strong move, which prepares ♗c5 in case of ...♗a3.
41...♗d2 41...♗a3 42.♗c5 ♗b2 43.♗b4!, and again it's hard for Black to get his bishop out.
42.♘e4 ♗e1+ 43.♗f2 I was very happy to get rid of Black's bishop pair.
43...♗xf2+ 44.♔xf2



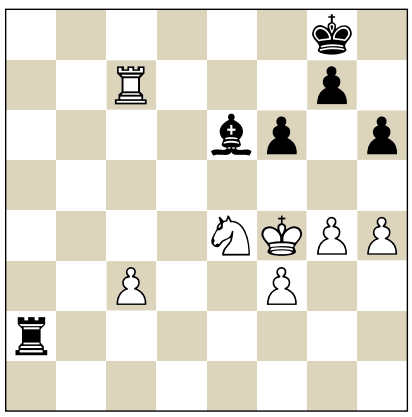
44...♖a2+?!
For better or worse, Black had to take his chances with 44...f5, because in the game he goes down without a fight.
44...f5 45.♘c5 ♖d6 46.♘xe6 (46.g5 hxg5 47.hxg5 f4 is not what I want) 46...♖xe6 47.gxf5 ♖e5, and here White has to decide whether or not

Zurich 2014 (rapid) — **cat. XXII**

			1	2	3	4	5	6		TPR
1 Fabiano Caruana	GM ITA	2781	*	1	½	1	½	1	4	3042
2 Hikaru Nakamura	GM USA	2776	0	*	1	½	1	1	3½	2952
3 Levon Aronian	GM ARM	2826	½	0	*	1	½	1	3	2865
4 Magnus Carlsen	GM NOR	2872	0	½	0	*	1	½	2	2711
5 Boris Gelfand	GM ISR	2761	½	0	½	0	*	½	1½	2657
6 Vishy Anand	GM IND	2773	0	0	0	½	½	*	1	2563

to take a move to damage Black's pawns with 48.f6 or start pushing with 48.c4. Both ways offer good winning chances but I couldn't find a clear-cut path to victory.

45.♔g3 ♖c2 Now 45...f5 46.♘c5 just wins. **46.♔f4 ♖a2**



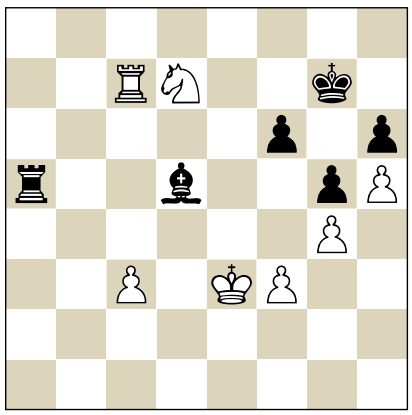
47.h5 I've achieved a bind and stopped ...f5. Now all that remains is to push the c-pawn.

47...♖a5

At first, I wasn't entirely sure how to proceed here, but then I saw a very attractive idea and got excited.

48.♘c5 ♗d5 49.♖c8+ ♔f7

Perhaps Levon thought I just wanted to repeat the position, because he seemed surprised by my next move. 49...♔h7 has the benefit of not losing on the spot, but that's where the good news ends: 50.♘d7 g5+ 51.♔e3 (51.hxg6+ ♔xg6 52.♖c7 threatens ♘f8 and is also very strong) 51...♔g7 52.♖c7, and Black won't survive for long.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

50.c4 The point. Now it's very easy, although I managed to prolong the game a bit more than was necessary.

50...♗a8 50...♗xc4 51.♘b7 wins a piece. **51.♖c7+ ♔g8 52.♘e6 ♖a3 53.♖xg7+ ♔h8 54.♔f5 ♗xf3 55.♖g6 ♗e2 56.♖xh6+ ♔g8 57.♖g6+ ♔h8 58.♖xf6 ♖f3+ 59.♘f4 ♗xc4 60.♔g5 ♔g8 61.♔h6 ♖a3 62.g5 ♖a7 63.g6 ♖c7 64.♘h3 ♖c8 65.♘g5 ♖d8 66.♘h7** Black resigned.

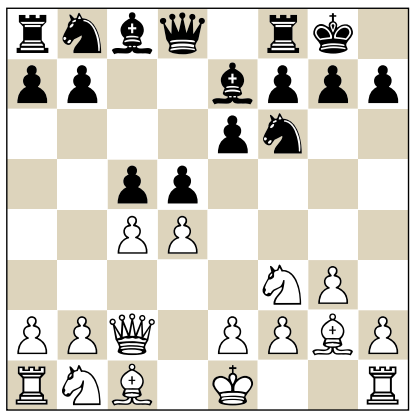
NEW IN CHESS

Oleg Skvortsov admires the Hermès scarf that his wife Natasha has just presented to World Champion Hou Yifan, who was invited to Zurich as a guest of honour.

NOTES BY
Levon Aronian

CA 4.2 – E06
Levon Aronian
Magnus Carlsen
Zurich Rapid 2014 (2)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♗g2 ♗e7 5.d4 0-0 6.♕c2 c5



7.0-0

In three rapid games (including games against Magnus in Monaco) played in 2008, I went for 7.dxc5. On reflection, I realized that 7.0-0 was more in keeping with my nature.

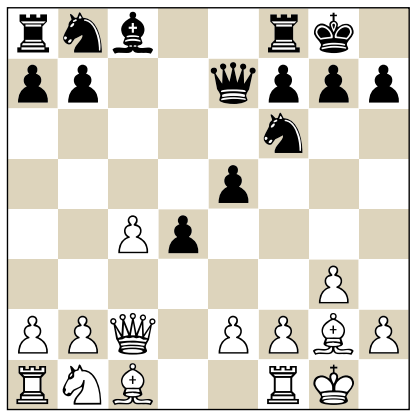
7...cxd4 8.♘xd4 e5

One of the moves that yield Black a totally equal game. 8...♘c6, 8...♕b6 and 8...♘a6 are good alternatives.

9.♘f5 d4

9...dxc4 is a move for experienced simplifiers, who are not afraid of the two bishops. After the game-move the feeling arises that White is playing the Grünfeld Defence with reversed colours.

10.♘xe7+ ♕xe7



11.♗g5

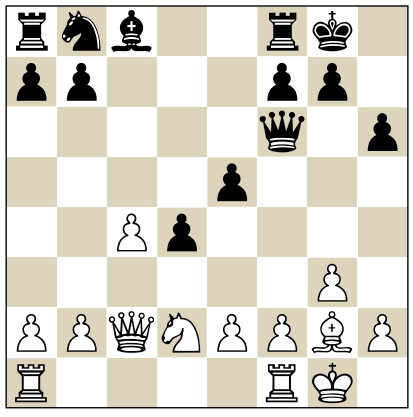
The most popular move. Of the strong players, it was first employed by Vlad Tkachiev, whose opening discoveries I regularly follow.

11...h6

Of course, it seems more logical to play ...♘bd7 and capture on f6 with the knight, but in that case Black is left with a pawn on d4 after 12.e3, which is not to everyone's taste.

12.♗xf6 ♕xf6 13.♘d2

Now White's plan is a3-b4-c5, i.e. typical Grünfeld play.



13...♗f5

A new move, which leads to more intricate consequences than the usual 13...♘c6.

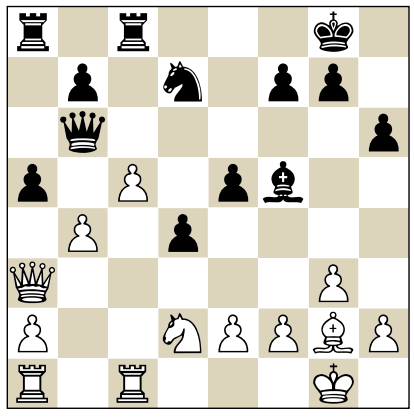
14.♕b3 ♘d7

It would be interesting to test 14...♘a6, an original way of forestalling the play with b2-b4.

15.♕a3 ♕b6 16.♖fc1

In rapid games it is not worth thinking about which rook, so I quickly decided on the more ambitious continuation.

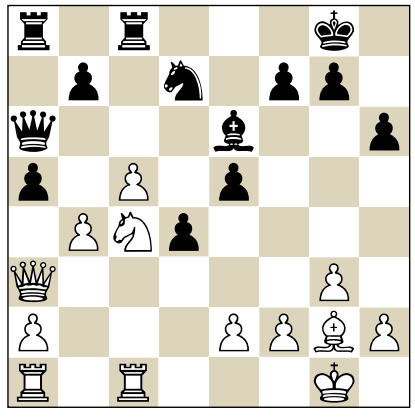
16...♖fc8 17.b4 a5 18.c5



18...♕a6 The losing move. I have a suspicion that Magnus did not notice that after 18...♕b5 19.♘c4 axb4 20.♕f3 he had 20...e4 21.♕xf5 ♖xc5, with normal play.

It should be mentioned that after 18...♕a7 19.c6 bxc6 20.♘c4, White has a pleasant position.

19.♘c4 ♗e6



20.♘d6

20.b5 wins even more easily, but I wanted to exchange the queens.

20...axb4 21.♕xa6 bxa6

One brand, two apps

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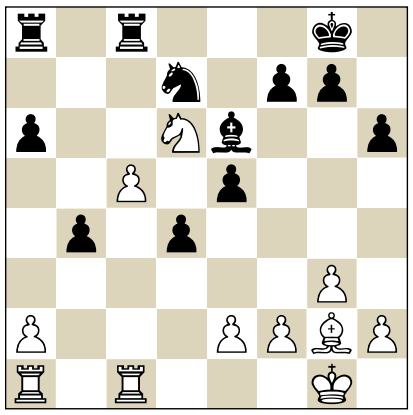
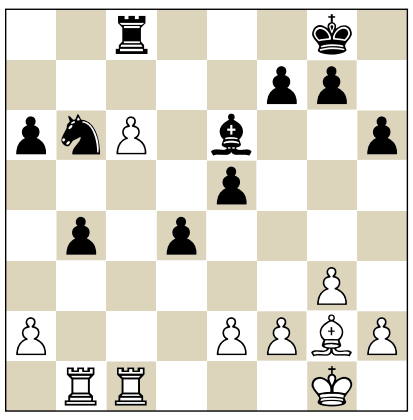
Two New In Chess apps: different design, same quality

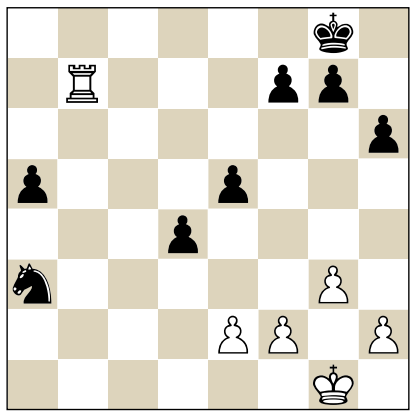
The top finishers after five days of classical and one day of rapid chess: Fabiano Caruana (2nd on tiebreak), Magnus Carlsen (1st) and Levon Aronian (3rd).



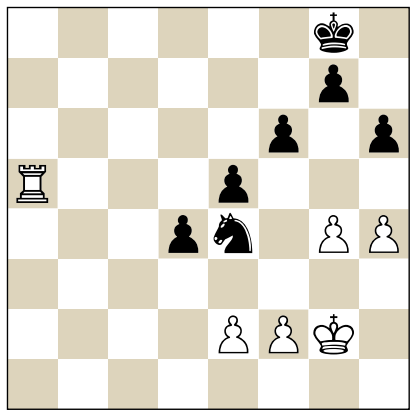
22.♘xc8
This reflex grab overcame common sense. After 22.f4 Black ends up in a similar position to the game, only even more hopeless.
22...♖xc8 23.c6 ♘b6 24.♖ab1
Concerned about the manoeuvre of the b6-knight to c3, I decided not to take any risks.



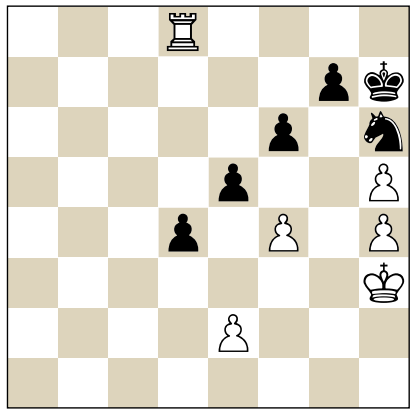
24...a5 25.a3 b3 26.c7 ♗c4
After 26...a4 27.♗b7 ♖e8 28.♖c6 ♘c8 29.♖c5 Black cannot simultaneously defend all his weaknesses.
27.♗b7
Naturally, 27.♗h3 was not good in view of 27...♖xc7 28.♖xb3 ♘d5, when the knight makes its way to c3.
27...♖xc7 28.♖xb3 ♖xb7 29.♖xc4 ♘xc4 30.♖xb7 ♘xa3
Did I think that the position was won? No, but I was sure that it was easier to win than for Black to draw.



31.♔g2
There is no reason to rush, and slow expansion on the kingside is the key to success.
31...♘c4 32.g4 ♘d6 33.♖a7 f6
Of course, many would have held on to the pawn as long as possible, but here it is hard to understand what Black should be aiming for.
34.♖xa5 ♘e4 35.h4



35...h5 This idea cannot be good. 35...♘c3 was more resilient.
36.gxh5 More resolute was 36.f4, but I thought that, since I had achieved such a good position, it was worth enjoying it to the full.
36...♔h7 37.♖a8 ♘d6 38.♔f3 ♘f5 39.♔g4 ♘h6+ 40.♔h3 ♘f5 41.♖d8 ♘h6 42.f4 This is decisive.



42...exf4 43.♖xd4 ♘f7 44.♖xf4 ♔h6 45.♖f5 ♘d6 46.♖d5 ♘c4 47.♔g3 ♘e3 48.♖c5 ♘f1+ 49.♔f4 ♘d2 50.e3 ♘b3 51.♖c3 ♘a5 52.♖c8 ♔h7 53.♔f5
Black resigned. ■

Final Standings
Classical & Rapid combined

1	Magnus Carlsen	10
2	Fabiano Caruana	9
3	Levon Aronian	9
4	Hikaru Nakamura	7½
5	Vishy Anand	5
6	Boris Gelfand	4½

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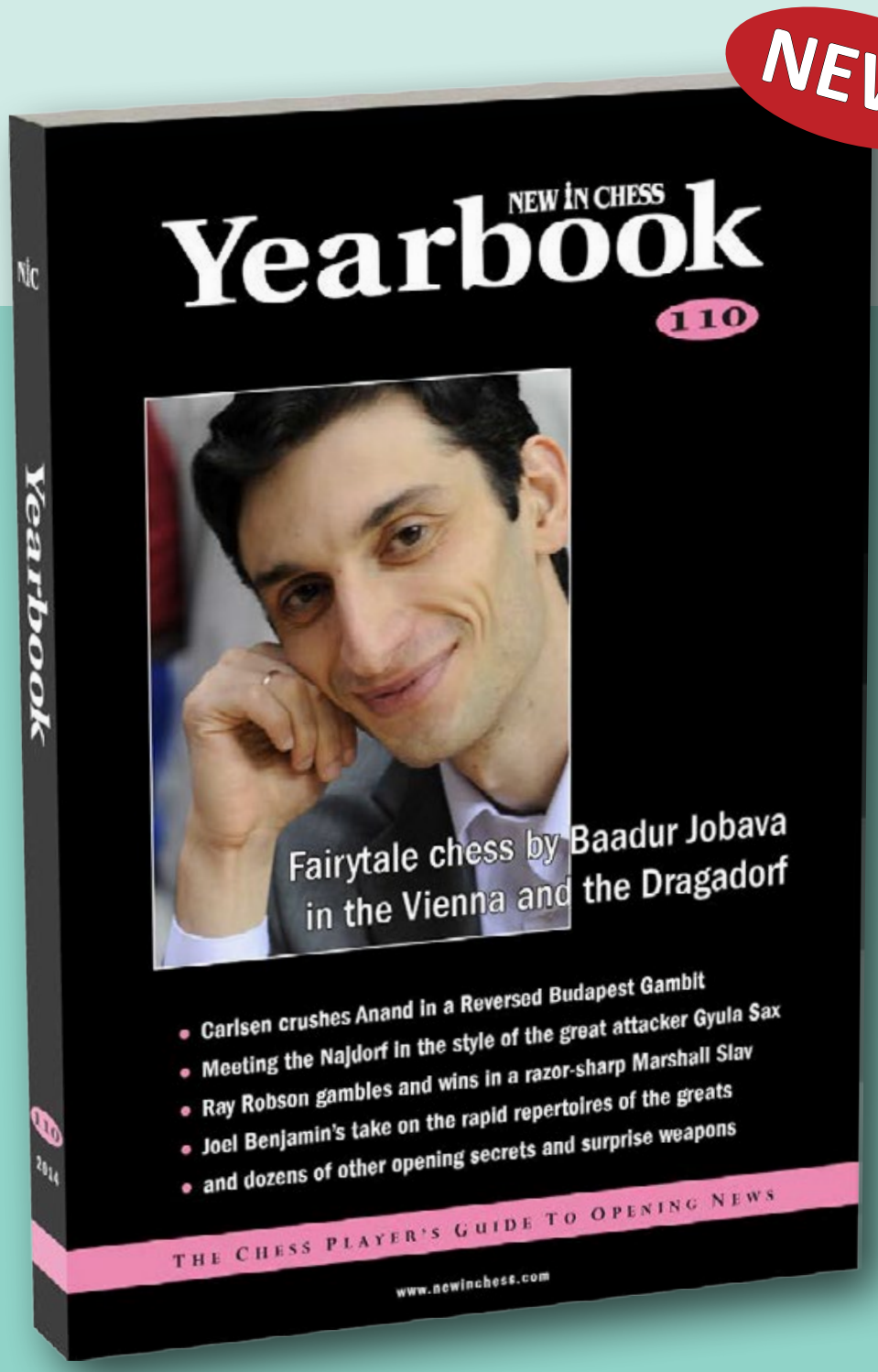
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Fair & Square

Stephen Fry: 'A chess master once told me that the best chess move to play is not the best chess move, it's the move your opponent least wants you to play. So don't always think about the right thing to do. Think about the thing that would most annoy Putin.'
(About supporting the fight for human rights in Russia)

Rory Sutherland: 'Imagine the disparity in earnings and waste of talent you would see if all people were appointed to jobs simply on their chess-playing abilities.'
(In his column in 'The Spectator')

Lennox Lewis: 'When someone calls you a name you want to punch them out … chess teaches you to think through the next moves.'
(The former boxing champion, interviewed by Dominic Lawson, BBC Radio 4)

Magnus Carlsen: One of my main interests at that time was to beat my sister at everything she did. I started training a lot in order to beat her. Gradually, I realised chess was a very interesting game in itself.'
(On growing up in Norway, in Gulf News)

David Norwood: 'The public perception of the chess community is that we are an odd bunch. We have an image of being rather weird and anti-social. However, I am pleased to announce that having seen other games players, we are relatively normal.'
(Talking at the Mind Sports Olympiad)

David Bronstein: 'Do you really believe that I will attack Smyslov for only three roubles a day?'
(During the 1971 Alekhine Memorial in Moscow, after agreeing a 12 move draw with Smyslov that led to him being chastised by an official, who pointed out that, after all, the Soviet Chess Federation was paying them to play)

Jacob Aagaard: 'If you try to improve your chess in the gym mainly, you will be sorely disappointed.'
(On his QC blog)

Bill Hartston: 'Chess is not something that drives people mad; it is something that keeps mad people sane.'

Walter Lacqueur: [Reviewing *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* by Christopher Clark] 'Like a chess analyst, Clark shows how each move and countermove by many different players led to a colossal checkmate.'
(The London Review of Books)

Gregor Piatigorsky: 'He approaches the chess board as if about to perform a sacrament, and when one watches his deep concentration at play, even his silence seems different from the silence of the others.'
(On Lajos Portisch)

Bill Gates: 'Wow, that was fast.'
(After he lost in 9 moves to Magnus Carlsen in a TV chat show)

Vadim Repin: 'I haven't yet met an art form I wasn't attracted to. I even consider chess an art form. I do play, though I'm not very good. One of my oldest friends, Vladimir Kramnik, is a [former] world champion.'
(One of the world's greatest violinists, interviewed in The Guardian)

Peter Heine Nielsen: 'He is a very independently thinking World Champion, who is not scared of going against cemented dogmas. World Championship matches have long been fought with deep opening analysis and lots of seconds, but Carlsen won the title with only fellow Norwegian Jon Ludvig Hammer helping him via Skype. Even Fischer had a bigger machine assisting him!'
(Magnus Carlsen's current second seems to shed clarity on his predecessor(s), in Skakbladet)

Laszlo Szabo: 'When the Romanian master Stefan Szabo died, the press agencies announced my death by mistake. In fact, the English chess player Hugh Alexander had already published my obituary in his chess column when I arrived at Hastings.'
(On why people looked startled when he arrived at the 1954/55 Hastings Tournament)

Jan Hein Donner: 'In the end, it all starts with a certain love for wood.'
(On becoming a grandmaster, in a 1979 Dutch TV documentary)

‘Uncomplicated, but sincere, full of striving for beauty and love’

Vugar Gashimov 1986-2014

The last tournament that Vugar Gashimov played in was the 2012 Tata Steel Chess Tournament. This year, at the start of the 76th edition, the players observed a minute’s silence to commemorate their colleague, who had succumbed to his fatal illness in a clinic in Heidelberg the day before. He was only 27 years old.
Gashimov was one of the greatest talents of the young generation and rose to 6th place in the world rankings in 2009. Azerbaijani sports journalist **Teimour Tushiev** closely followed the career of his compatriot. He remembers an unusually gifted and brilliant chess player who won everyone’s heart with his self-effacing manner, his warmth, his wit and his love of life.

NEW IN CHESS

Vugar Gashimov photographed in Monaco 2011. 'Happiness is being with people whom you love and who love you. Unhappiness is losing those people.'

Vugar Gashimov suffered from epilepsy from childhood, which hindered him from fully immersing himself in chess. However, even then many experts, including foreign ones, concurred in the opinion that Vugar possessed great talent and was only using 15 percent of it because of his affliction. Mainly because of his illness Vugar played in big junior events quite rarely, preferring to play blitz on the Internet. At one stage he was even considered one of the strongest online players in the world.

Two-time Soviet champion Vitaly Tseshkovsky, who was once invited to work with the young Vugar, said of him: 'A real volcano, his eyes blaze. You'd hardly managed to set up a position on the board when the variations started pouring out. His imagination was unlimited, his calculation deep. Even in the most apparently stressful positions he found interesting, non-standard ways of continuing the battle. As when I met Volodya Kramnik, I didn't doubt that I had a future world champion in front of me. But the child

had a terrible illness, due to which he couldn't take advantage of all his opportunities.'

After his junior successes Vugar Gashimov fell out of sight because of his multiple operations, which in the end produced a positive outcome. In 2007 Vugar returned to chess, won several open tournaments, and then received an invitation to the first stage of the FIDE Grand Prix, which he also won together with Magnus Carlsen and Wang Yue. This success came as a surprise to many Azerbaijani chess fans, as at the time they were all hoping for a win from the already elite grandmasters Teimour Radjabov and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov. After that victory Vugar said in his interviews that he had come back to chess to win. Those weren't just words, as he lost quite rarely, and the number of his victories began to increase quickly after the Baku Grand Prix.

In 2009 Gashimov delivered victory to the Azerbaijani team at the European Team Championship in Novi Sad by winning a dramatic seven-hour game against the Dutchman Daniel Stellwagen. At this time he broke through powerfully into the top 10 in the world rankings, rising to sixth place. After that Vugar became a real chess star, not only in Azerbaijan. Meanwhile he remained just the same modest, witty and always life-loving young man.

Vugar had a very multifaceted personality. For example, not many people know that he wrote poetry. Another Baku born grandmaster, Emil Sutovsky, wrote about this in his reminiscences about Gashimov: 'I recall that in 2007 Vugar showed me his poetry – uncomplicated, but sincere, full of striving for beauty and love. A little later we found that we both knew the famous TV comedy skit by The Boys from Baku – 'The Three Tenors' – by heart. And to bemused looks from our colleagues we quoted excerpts from it, rewriting some of the lines to make chess references. Vugar was a warm person. There aren't many of these. There are virtually none like him.

'Vivacious, happy, with an incredible sense of humour, easy to get along with, but at the same time far from lightweight, and, as is typical for any well-brought-up Azerbaijani, never forgetting his family and respectful (or reverent if you like) towards his parents... That's how everyone who knew Vugar remembers him.'

The author of these lines knew Vugar Gashimov for quite a long time, but the only foreign tournament I ended up being in with him was the 2009 World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk. Vugar wasn't on his best form then, and it was clear that the games were quite difficult for him. He often had to take his matches to a tiebreak, but his stubbornness and hard work at the board bore fruit. He held on in the tournament for longer than the other Azerbaijani players, reaching the tiebreak stage of the quarter finals, where he couldn't overcome Ruslan Ponomariov. After almost every game he played in the World Cup Vugar was detained in the press centre talking to journalists who were interested in the way this or that game had gone. He gave the maximum possible amount of time to each of them, analysing games in detail, even ones he'd lost or when he wasn't in the best mood.

Gashimov's final press conference after his loss to Ruslan Ponomariov in the quarter finals was spirited, warm and funny in places. Vugar always radiated warmth and sincerity, it came out in everything he did. One of the remarks Vugar made turned out to be somewhat prophetic, and at the same time precisely revealed the internal world of the talented Azerbaijani player: 'I won't say I'm a fatalist. I just think that nothing accidental happens

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Thousands of people came to pay their last respects. On the left, one of the men carrying the coffin in the streets of Baku, is Vugar Gashimov's brother Sarkhan.

in life. It seems to me that a person can change a few details of his fate, but can't change anything in the bigger picture. Wins and losses are also written in our destiny. You can sometimes prolong this pleasure more, sometimes less, but in the final analysis nothing changes... Life goes on. It's wonderful. So we have to keep living.'

Vugar tried to prolong his enjoyment of life to the end. Despite his great love of chess, he also had many other interests. He could often be seen in the role of guest on various intellectual TV programmes, and experts often couldn't find the answer to his questions on the popular show 'What? Where? When?'. Whenever he could he also did useful volunteer work.

'And after the handshake he immediately started to joke. Lively chatter mixed with laughter,' grandmaster Boris Savchenko recalls. 'At first I didn't understand what kind of person Vugar was, but word for word, when he started sharing his experience – talking about the opportunity to earn money and the length of good chess tournaments, enthusiastically explaining how to get into them, I got the impression that this person was rather kind, and this was confirmed again more than once.

'We would meet in the tournament hall and in the gym. Even then Vugar surprised me with his serious attitude towards physical training. When he talked about it, lying under the barbells, you felt just how important this was to him.'

Even at the peak of his career Vugar gave a great deal of attention to junior chess in Azerbaijan and quite often travelled around the republic's regions and gave simuls for children who were studying in the chess schools. He did all of this free of charge, trying to help young gifted Azerbaijanis improve their chess mastery. Vugar also helped players on the Azerbaijani team quite often, sharing his work on various openings. Patriotic feelings for his native country occupied a special place in the life of Vugar Gashimov.

Some of the less good episodes in Vugar's chess biography were also associated with the Azerbaijani team. At the Azerbaijani team's first World Team Championship in 2010 Vugar fell out with the leadership of the Azerbaijani Chess Federation. The mutual accusations led to the talented grandmaster being dropped from the national team. For a player for whom an appearance for the national team was the pinnacle of his personal ambitions and his top priority, this state of affairs could have taken its toll on his psychological condition. He suffered immensely during this period, and it's possible that all this had an effect on his overall health in some way. Despite the difficulties and problems that arose, he remained true to his principles and didn't back down from his positions. This was one of the features of Vugar's character, which also displayed itself at the chessboard. The softness and kindness of his character shouldn't be misinterpreted – he defended his position in any particular situation forcefully and to the end. At the same time, despite his young age, he was wise enough, and when the situation required it, he could compromise. In the end justice triumphed and Vugar returned to the Azerbaijani team, and his relations with the national chess federation normalized.

It seemed that Gashimov would be in the elite of world players for a long time and would become a candidate for the world chess crown. But in 2011 something terrible happened – Vugar lost consciousness at the European Team Championship in the match against the French team. And here his

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov:

'It's very difficult when you lose a person you've known for 20 years. We always shared happy moments and supported each other in difficult times. His death affected me very strongly, and I think about him constantly. I stopped preparing for the Candidates' Tournament, as I can't think about anything else. It's very difficult for all of us at the moment. I can't believe that Vugar is no longer with us.'

Vugar Gashimov in his own words

'I always thought that the main things were talent and God's gift. You can't do without those. But if you combine talent, patience and the ability to work, you get the ideal chess player.'

'Heroes? I really like the fourth World Champion, Alexander Alekhine, I'm very familiar with his playing style, and I've read several of his books. Viswanathan Anand really appeals to me. I very much empathize with people who, after achieving success and recognition, don't lose their positive human qualities. Most of all I value honesty and decency in people. Specifically in a man – being true to his word, and in a woman – tenderness and elegance.'

'I always trained myself to believe that you have to be equally calm about wins and losses. What has happened is already behind you, regardless of whether you lost or won. You have to think about the next encounter.'

'I'm a big fan of football, table tennis and billiards. My favourite football teams are Italy's Juventus and the Brazilian team.'

'There's nothing dearer to me than Azerbaijan, and nobody and nothing can change my attitude towards my homeland.'

'In the most difficult period of my life, when I left sport, our president Ilham Aliyev supported me. And I do everything in my power so that our country is always advancing.'

'Happiness is being with people whom you love and who love you. Unhappiness is losing those people.'

'I can forgive everything except betrayal. I don't know what being a hero means. I haven't been one yet. I can't stand people who sell their honour for money.'

'I'm always in a good mood. And being too trusting is my only real fault.'

'I'd like to die having lived a worthy life. When I meet God, the first thing I'll ask is, 'Why did you give me such a wonderful destiny?''

combative qualities came out, which were always intrinsic to him. Team captain Vladimir Tukmakov didn't want to include him in the subsequent matches, but Gashimov insisted on continuing to play, despite the threat to his health. As a result it was to a large extent thanks to him that the Azerbaijani team won the silver medals at that European Championship.

The supertournament at Wijk aan Zee in 2012 was the last big tournament of Vugar's life, after which it was discovered that he had a malignant brain tumour. Typical for his personality, exactly a year later at Wijk aan Zee 2013, Gashimov, who was already seriously ill, helped his friend Sergey Karjakin in the preparation for his games. As the Russian grandmaster recalled: 'When he was already in a very poor condition, as I understand it, there was a slight improvement. And when I was playing at Wijk aan Zee he even prepared a little for me for some of my games. He was completely optimistic, he said everything would be OK, that he would come back... But it didn't happen. After I became Rapid World Champion I remembered a phrase of his. He said that now I have to play for the two of us. And I've tried.'

For all his last days he fought for his life with the support of the Azerbaijani state, but qualified experts in Germany turned out to be powerless against the advancing cancerous tumour. This was a game that Vugar Gashimov couldn't win.

Despite everything, Vugar remained a happy young man until the end, with a constant smile on his face. Everyone who had met him even once remarked on the warmth that emanated from him. At the same time he was a sincere person and always valued this quality in others. Vugar possessed a rare chess talent that wasn't fully realized, and it was largely thanks to him that an opening as risky as the Modern Benoni was reanimated, and his work in that opening enjoys popularity among chess players.

Tens of thousands of people came to say goodbye to Vugar Gashimov at the Baku National Chess Centre, and one of the central streets of the Azerbaijani capital was temporarily closed. The great Azerbaijani grandmaster was laid to rest in the Alley of Honourable Burial, where the most famous Azerbaijani figures find their final homes.

The news of Vugar Gashimov's death was announced all over the world. In Brazil a chess club was formed that was named 'Gashimov' in his honour.

Moreover, Azerbaijani director Araz Mamedov, who lives in the USA, is making a feature film dedicated to Vugar Gashimov that will be called 'Grandmaster'. The shooting of this film began while Vugar was alive, and the player himself was a consultant for the film on chess issues. Professional actors are playing the parts, and Stuart Scott has the leading role.

In April this year there will be a supertournament with the participation of the strongest players on the planet in the Azerbaijani town of Shamkir. The event will be dedicated to the memory of Vugar Gashimov.

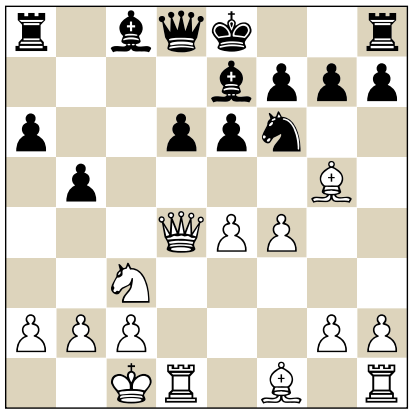
Teimour Radjabov:

'If I say that this is a big loss for us, I won't be saying anything. Vugar was a very dear person to all of us. We all remember very well his win in the decisive game of the last round of the European Championship in 2009. From childhood we played together, we constantly helped each other. We all hoped that he would recover and come back to chess. It's very difficult when you lose such a close friend.'

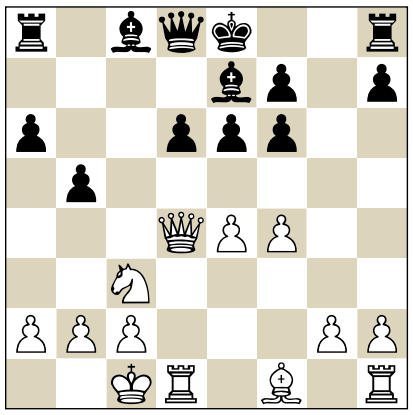
NOTES BY
Jan Timman

SI 27.10 – B66
Vugar Gashimov
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Elista 2008

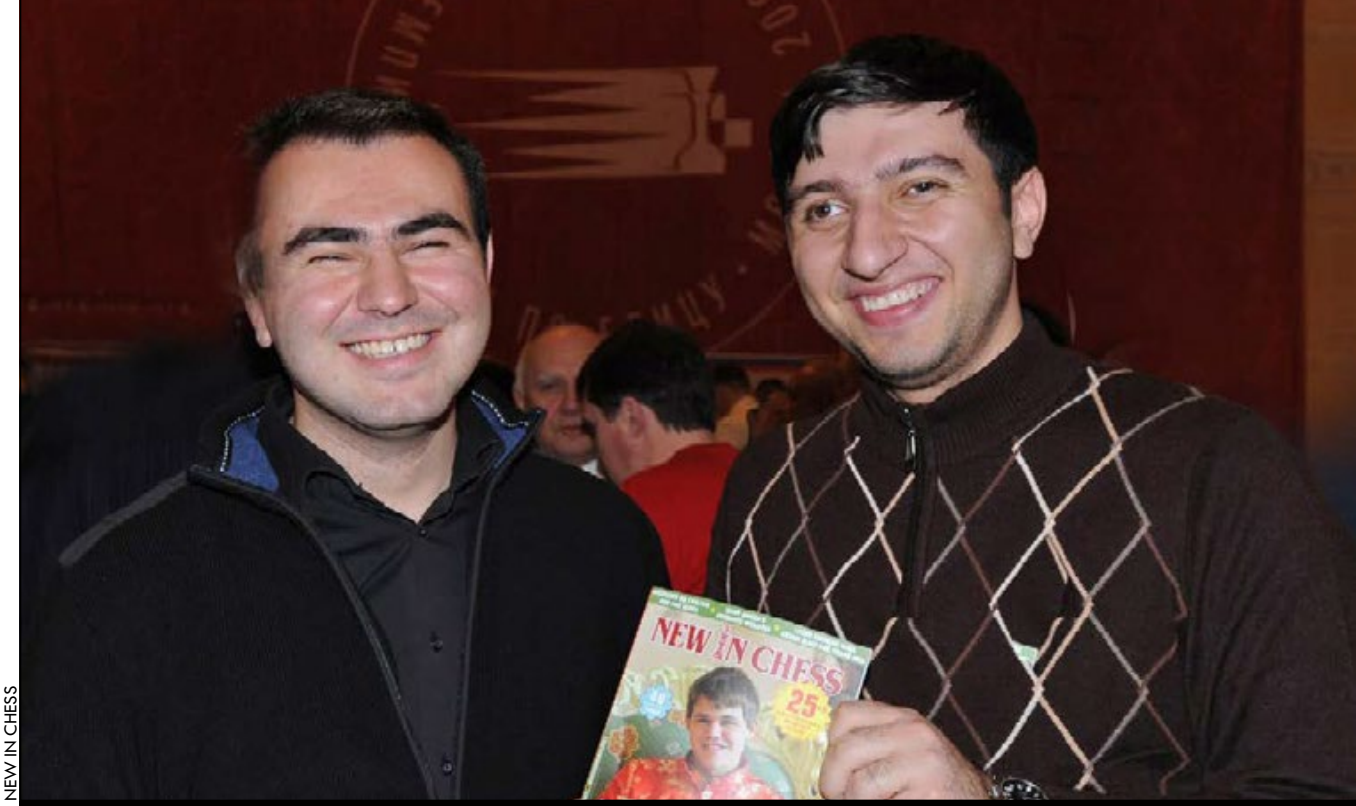
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♗g5
Gashimov was in the habit of always going for the sharpest and most principled opening variations. White announces his plan to castle queenside.
6...e6 7.♕d2 ♗e7 8.0-0-0 a6 9.f4 ♘xd4 10.♕xd4 b5



This approach gained popularity in 1996, after Kramnik had tried it against Kasparov.
11.♗xf6 gxf6



12.♗d3
The quiet positional continuation that Kasparov also went for against Kramnik. Later that year, Kasparov went for the sharp advance 12.e5 against Hracek, undoubtedly after a thorough analysis of the variation. Later practical examples showed that the advance is not as dangerous as it seemed.



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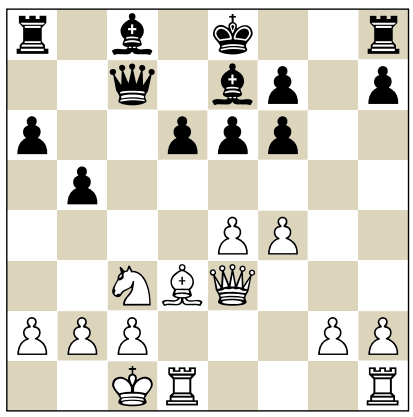
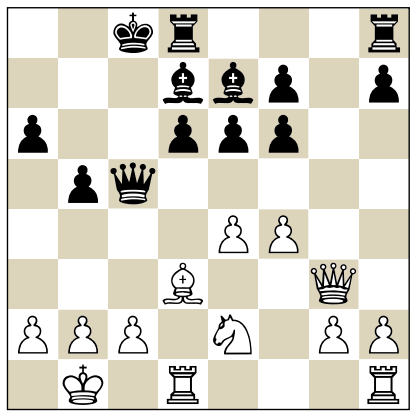
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov and Vugar Gashimov at the 2009 World Blitz Championship in Moscow. 'Vivacious, happy, with an incredible sense of humour.'

12...♕c7 13.♕e3



White has to withdraw the queen, as Black was threatening to force a favourable queen swap with 13...♕c5.
13...♗d7
Kramnik played 13...♕c5, taking his king to f8 later. This plan seems slightly dangerous, but Kramnik did not lose the game because of his opening play.
Mamedyarov has a different plan. He only wants to take his queen to c5 when he knows he will be able to castle queenside on the following move. It seems to me that, in that case, Black is better off preparing queenside castling with 13...♗b7. The queen's bishop is most actively placed on the long diagonal.
14.♔b1 ♕c5 15.♕g3 0-0-0 16.♘e2
Strong play. White usually only withdraws the knight when it is attacked by the b-pawn, but Gashimov has a classical plan: he wants to get the knight to f4 as quickly as possible (after the advance of the f-pawn) in order to exert maximum pressure on the black position. The fact that the white bishop is on d3 to cover the white outpost on f5 only favours him.



16...♔b8
Black doesn't seem to have a clear plan. 16...♗c6, aiming for the freeing advance ...d6-d5, seems a better option. After 17.f5 d5 18.exd5 ♗xd5 19.♕h3, followed by 20.♘c3, White would be able to claim a slight strategic plus, but no more.
17.f5 ♖dg8 18.♕f3 h5
A standard move in this kind of position. Black must prevent himself from getting hemmed in on the kingside.
19.♘f4
The knight has reached the vital square.
19...h4 20.♖he1

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With the Traxler Variation (1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.Ng5 Bc5!?) spearheading their repertoire, any player should look forward to fighting for the initiative against the Two Knights with Black. Its slightly dubious reputation shouldn't put you off from buying this DVD - as the author clearly demonstrates - a great deal of spectacular resources for Black are on show, supported by original analysis. Exponents of the Traxler variation in tournament practice include Shirov and Beliavsky, with the latter having used it to defeat Anand at Linares 1991. Tthe DVD also includes a host of ideas for actively meeting 4.d3 and 4.d4 as well, so that after studying the material you basically have a complete repertoire against the Italian Game!

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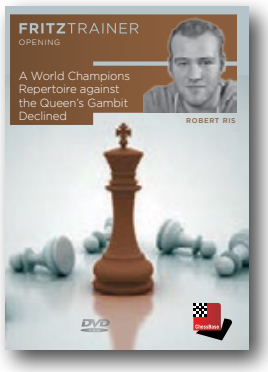
Robert Ris: A World Champion's Repertoire against the Queen's Gambit Declined



On this DVD Robert Ris offers a complete repertoire for handling this solid opening, often featuring a dynamic approach to pose the opponent more practical problems. Both of the main continuations 3... Nf6 and 3…Be7 are covered in two separate parts and their inherent differences and possible transpositions are mentioned wherever they arise. After seriously studying the theoretical lines, the strategic ideas and tactical motifs, you will surely be able to answer the quiz questions successfully and integrate this World Champion repertoire into your own games. With interactive training including video feedback and an exclusive database with 50 essential games.

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The Queens Gambit Declined (known as the 'QGD') is the "Mr. Reliable" of responses to 1.d4. A favourite of many of the world champions, both past and present, its reputation has never been called into question. After the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 - black sets up a solid centre and plays in a classical style; intending simple development, and quick castling to maintain central control. The QGD is a favourite of both club and professional players alike, due to the lack of forcing lines and the chances to outplay your opponent using superior middlegame strategies. Simply put - watch this DVD and your general chess understanding will improve! Let International Master Lorin D'Costa and chess-software expert Nick Murphy take you through the main ideas of the QGD in an easy to understand, conversational style. Video running time: 7 hours 28 min.

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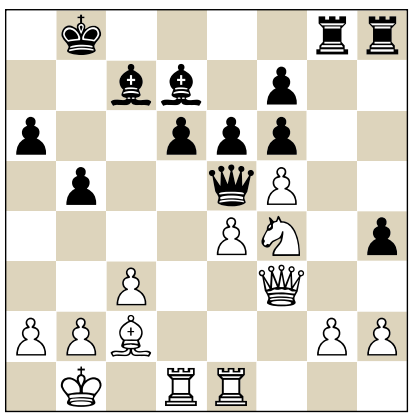
Exemplary centralization. White has mobilized all his forces and can now start increasing his strategic advantage.

20...♗d8 21.c3! An important move, clearing square c2 for the bishop.

21...♗c7 22.♗c2 ♕e5

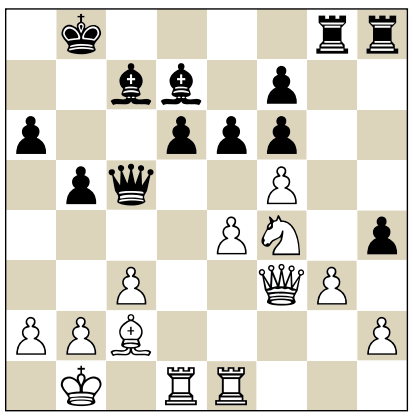
Remarkably enough, this centralization will endanger the queen. But it was hard to find a good alternative.



23.g3

A critical moment in the game. With the text, White makes it clear to his opponent that his queen is almost surrounded: 23...hxg3 is met by 24.♘d3. Yet it is not White's strongest move. Gashimov indicated 23.♖e2 as better, the point being that after 23...♗c6 24.♗b3! exf5 25.♗d5 ♗d7 26.exf5 ♕xf5+ 27.♗e4 ♕g4 28.♕d3 White will have a large positional advantage. Even stronger is 23.g4 to reinforce the white position. Now Black will find it very hard to create counterplay.

23...♕c5



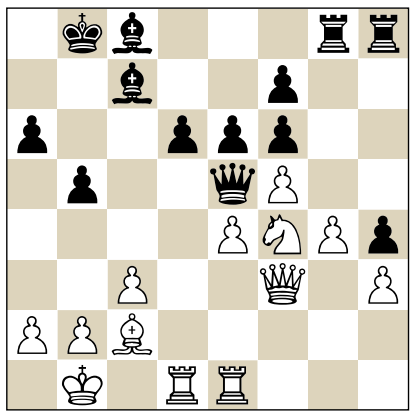
Mamedyarov misses his chance. With 23...♗c6! he could have exploited the fact that the white queen is unprotected, since 24.♘d3 is met by the surprising 24...♕xf5!.

After other moves Black also gets just enough counterplay, e.g. 24.g4 exf5 25.gxf5 h3 of 24.fxe6 fxe6 25.g4 f5!, and Black has freed himself.

24.g4!

Now this move is even stronger. White is holding all strategic trumps.

24...♗c8 25.h3 ♕e5



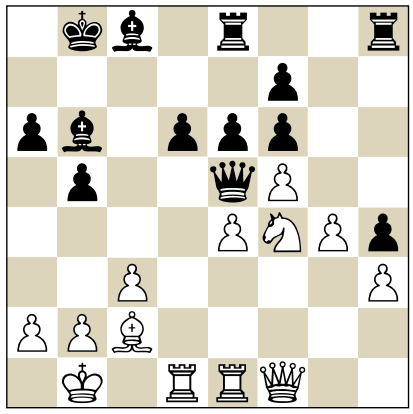
26.♘h5!

Preventing the advance ...d6-d5 and increasing the pressure on the enemy position.

26...♗b6 27.♕f1

Cool play. White may want to open a second front on the queenside with a2-a4. Not that this will happen in this game, as the decision will come on the kingside.

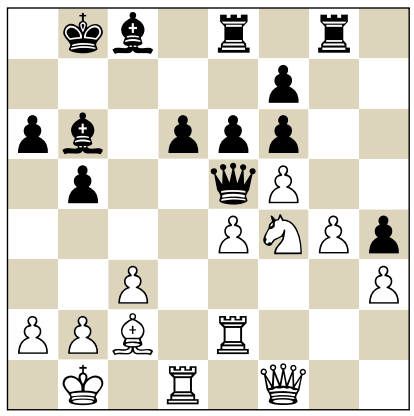
27...♖e8 28.♘f4



28...♖hg8

White was threatening 29.fxe6 fxe6 30.♘g6. Black could also have withdrawn his queen with 28...♕c5, after which White plays 29.fxe6 fxe6 30.♘g6 ♖hg8 31.♕xf6 ♗d8 32.♕f7 ♕c7 33.♕xc7+ ♔xc7 34.e5, with a technically winning position.

29.♖e2



29...♗c7

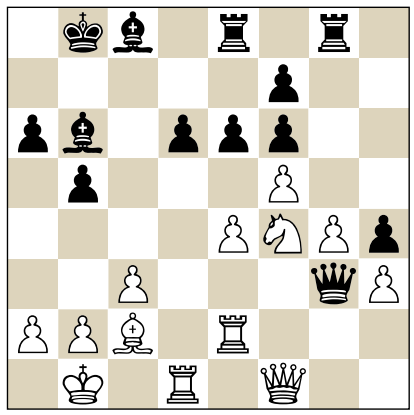
Now the black queen will be caught. Black's only move was 29...♕c5, after which White can play very strongly with 30.♖ed2 ♖d8 31.♘h5, and Black will no longer be able to defend the weak pawns in his camp.

30.♘d3 ♕g3

Forcing the black queen to try its luck in enemy territory.

31.♘f4 ♗b6

And the trap is sprung. Now that the white knight has alighted on f4 for the third time, Black is totally bereft of defensive resources.



32.♖de1!

Extra cover for square e3. Mamedyarov resigned because he had no reply to the threat of 33.♖g2.

In the world of the endgame study, studies without captures are highly appreciated, making the study all about manoeuvring. In this game, too, this is impressive to watch. After the thematic exchange on move 11 no more captures are made. Vugar Gashimov's superior manoeuvring skills brought him victory. A model game. ■

Agony

In September 2012, in Istanbul, the FIDE General Assembly dutifully passed an agreement, selling the commercial rights of most of the main FIDE events, including the World Championship, to Agon – an offshore company founded in January 2012, in Jersey, and ostensibly owned by the American fashion photographer Andrew Paulson.

The contract runs to 11 pages and requires considerable thought as to its implications – even assuming the reader is fluent in English, which, of course, many Delegates are not. Occupied as I had been with playing, I had no time to cast more than a cursory glance at the document. Instead, I asked Ank Santens, the Belgian lawyer from White & Case, who had largely drafted the new FIDE statutes, what she thought of it. In her view, it was simply awful: far too much was being given away, for too little, for too long (over a decade and with easy terms for renewal). In no way was this agreement in FIDE's proper interest.

I posed a few questions from the floor, to Andrew Paulson, concerning the capitalisation of the company. These were deftly evaded – perhaps unsurprisingly given that the equity of Agon is a non-confidence-inspiring $2. Tomasz Sielicki, of Poland, made the important point that Agon was already in breach of the contract as it had failed to meet the deadline for the initial payment of $500,000. Anyway, it was clear from the mood of the house that this vigil, in defence of FIDE's finances, was in vain: the agreement was going to pass willy-nilly, which it duly did.

Given that the official contract was so bad, there were suspicions, right from the beginning, that there might be a side agreement. In March 2013, I stayed with Raymond Keene during the London Candidates, which was organised by Paulson, and where I acted as a commentator. I asked Ray, over a delicious breakfast, whether he thought that Kirsan had a share in Agon. He answered phlegmatically 'yes, of course' and that Andrew had told him as much. Previously, over lunch at the Garrick Club, in London, Andrew Paulson had described the Agon-FIDE agreement to me as 'asset-stripping'. A picture was beginning to emerge.

During the summer of 2013, Andrew Paulson decided to run for the Presidency of the English Chess Federation and was eager to solicit my support. You may look askance as to why an American, who has never even played a game of chess in the country, should be allowed to run for the federation's most important post (my previous opponent for the position of ECF Delegate was a representative of Papua New Guinea. I do sometimes think we English take our liberality too far). Anyway, be that as it may, Andrew and I spoke by Skype in August. He was in India at the time whereas I was working as a commentator in Tromsø, Norway.

I asked him about Agon. He candidly admitted that he (A.P.) had initially proposed to take all the rights (plus some financial risk) but then Kirsan had entered, wanting his share of the pie. This had apparently caused Nigel Freeman, FIDE's treasurer, a degree of consternation. Paulson explicitly stated that Kirsan (at the time our conversation was taking place, at least) was the majority shareholder. He also said that a Russian business associate of Kirsan's was also involved in the deal – although no name was given.

I was shocked by this, to be honest, although by now nothing that the FIDE President does ought to surprise me anymore. Assuming what Paulson had told me was true, the deal was undoubtedly unethical and possibly illegal too. If a CEO gives away some of the principal assets of his company to a private offshore company, which he majority-owns, and fails to inform his shareholders of his own financial interest in the deal, he is guilty of fraud. People go to prison for that. To use a sporting analogy: it was as if Sepp Blatter had awarded himself the rights to the FIFA World Cup.

As I hadn't recorded the conversation, I had no proof – only the knowledge of what I had heard. It was clear to me, however, that Paulson was totally unfit to be ECF President. Unfortunately, his opponent in the election was the thoroughly uninspiring incumbent Roger Edwards, who, when he previously ran unopposed, had barely defeated Mr. 'none of the above'. His only known policy was to oppose the very successful membership scheme. In the words of Steve Giddins, it was a choice between a man who promised nothing and was guaranteed to deliver, and another man (Paulson) who promised the Earth. Few people believed everything Paulson said, but if he was successful with just some of his grand schemes, it was

> ‘To use a sporting analogy: it was as if Sepp Blatter had awarded himself the rights to the FIFA World Cup.’

a no-brainer: he was elected convincingly.

A short while later I became aware of the existence of a secret, signed memorandum between Paulson and Ilyumzhinov. At first I heard only snippets of the terms, which confirmed what I already knew from the ECF President. There were some delightful additional details – Paulson was apparently a salaried employee of Ilyumzhinov’s, earning 240,000 euros per annum. FIDE Deputy President Georgios Makropoulos was to be paid 150,000 euros yearly in his capacity as consultant. Geoffrey Borg’s Global Chess also made an appearance as a beneficiary, which came as no surprise at all to those familiar with the workings of FIDE. Unfortunately, it took me some months to actually get my hands on a scanned copy of the document.

I informed the *Sunday Times*, who said they were very interested in running the story. In the process of their research, I learned a few things. Agon has the right to issue 10,000 shares but only two had been – both to Andrew Paulson. Outwardly this would seem to provide conclusive proof that Paulson is the 100% owner of the company. However, under Jersey law, this does not preclude the possibility of a side-arrangement. Indeed, I was told by a senior figure at Deloitte that this is rather common. For such an arrangement to be legal, the only requirement is that the financial authority is informed.

Ilyumzhinov, Paulson, Makropoulos and Freeman (the latter two being the FIDE representatives of the ‘Interface’ – the only people with access to Agon accounts, according to the official agreement) were contacted by the *Sunday Times* on Thursday 16th January. Ilyumzhinov and Freeman declined to answer any questions. Paulson, who was in Berlin, said he would speak to the reporter, Tim Rayment, at length, on the following Tuesday. The suspicion was he was stalling for time but, being out of the country, he had a legitimate excuse. The newspaper decided to hold the story for a further week.

ANASTASIA KARLOVICH

Andrew Paulson and Kirsan Ilyumzhinov at the 2012 London Grand Prix. Offering their services or filling their own pockets?

In the face of potentially devastating revelations, one could expect vigorous efforts would be made to deflect attention from the main story. Over the next 48 hours, the apparently non-existent ‘Bill Warth’ leaked a hacked draft contract between Garry Kasparov and Ignatius Leong, concerning campaign finance, which gave the impression of impropriety. Andrew Paulson then vigorously circulated Mr. Warth’s disclosure to numerous journalists. A major story would soon appear in the *New York Times*. Crucially, unlike the secret Agon Memorandum, this document was unsigned. Kasparov himself published the final contract at a press conference in Wijk aan Zee a few days later and called upon his opponents to be open and do the same. This quelled

the uproar, but not without Kasparov suffering some reputational damage. The pro-Kirsan forces had got their blow in first.

Paulson answered the *Sunday Times*' initial questions through his lawyers. He also spoke to the ECF Board of issuing an injunction. Nevertheless, he did meet the journalist, for three and a half hours, as promised. When the story eventually appeared, however, it was wishy-washy and lacking in all coherence. I expressed my disappointment to the author. He replied saying that he couldn't bear to look at the printed version himself. I asked whether I could infer that there had been late threats of litigation. He didn't reply – the only time this particularly diligent correspondent did not do so.

'Even if this draft were only valid for a day, it means that Paulson proposed, and Kirsan accepted, an unethical deal.'

Thus far the signatories of the memorandum had escaped relatively unscathed. It wasn't long, though, before the actual document appeared on the Internet, in a thoughtful, excoriating piece by Peter Doggers of *ChessVibes*. This provoked a how-dare-you-cast-aspersions response from the fide.com website, entitled 'The Truth about the FIDE-Agon Contract'.

We were told, with considerable emphasis, that this was just one of several drafts submitted by Andrew Paulson. As you will recall, this fits in with what Paulson had told me, by Skype, in August 2013, about proposing to take all rights himself, before Kirsan came in wanting his share of the pie. It notably failed to explain why the President of FIDE signed the 'draft' awarding himself 51% of the rights to the most important FIDE events, because signing is not what people generally do, unless they intend to adhere to the terms. Even if this draft were only valid for a day, it means that Paulson proposed, and Kirsan accepted, an unethical deal.

We were then told that Mr Makropoulos himself rejected the terms of this 'draft' – presumably because he objected to being paid 150,000 euros a year, according to a secret contract that most likely no one would ever know about, for doing next-to-nothing. Mr Makropoulos is very well known in the chess world and I will let others draw their own conclusions about the plausibility of this claim. It is certainly not possible to disprove it without seeing the Agon accounts. Alas, only Makropoulos and Freeman have this access from the FIDE side – and neither has been particularly forthcoming.

How much money has FIDE earned by 'selling' the commercial rights to Agon in 2012? The initial $500,000 has never been paid, which begs the question as to why FIDE has not terminated the contract. At a Presidential Board meeting last year, the Board accepted Makropoulos' proposal that Kirsan decide what to do about this money owed to FIDE. If Kirsan did indeed own the majority of Agon, and therefore he himself owed the half million dollars to FIDE, the decision to do nothing (i.e. what happened) would, of course, be readily explicable. In the meantime, numerous high profile events – the six FIDE Grand Prix tournaments in London, Tashkent, Zug, Thessaloniki, Beijing and Paris; the London Candidates; the Tromsø World Cup and the Anand-Carlsen World Championship match – have all taken place. Money has been paid for commercial rights by the organisers of some, if not all, of these events. That's a lot of funds. Where has it gone? Has FIDE made a single penny from giving away its crown jewels? Or is everything disappearing into the black hole of Agon? The chess world deserves some proper answers.

Is the secret, signed Agon Memorandum an ephemeral, insignificant draft – just one of many – as FIDE asserts? If it were, it would be hard to understand why Paulson spent thousands of pounds in lawyers' fees attempting to prevent its publication. The alternative hypothesis is that the agreement is, or was, at least until recently, valid and in operation. That would explain why such a poor official deal was negotiated originally and why that agreement has never been terminated by FIDE, despite Agon being in flagrant breach of the terms. This scenario also fits in precisely with what Paulson privately confided to not only Raymond Keene and myself, but also to Malcolm Pein, as recently as October 2013 – that Kirsan *is* the majority shareholder. Even if you are prepared to give the President of FIDE the benefit of the doubt, he still has plenty of explaining to do. His signature proves that either he does not understand, or does not care, what is a gross conflict of interest. ■

Yochanan Afek

Beware: Brilliancy!

Oversights are part of the practice of each and everyone of us. All six positions below featured in games of masters and grandmasters at the 76th Tata Steel tournament. Can you improve on their play?

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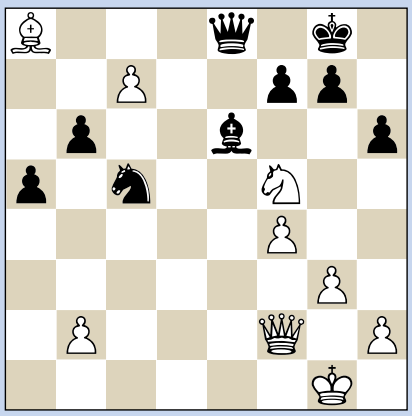

1. White to play

With two hanging pieces and a shaky pawn on the 7th rank White played for a win with **35.♕e3 ♕xa8 36.c8♕+ ♗xc8 37.♕e8+ ♔h7 38.♘e7** but lost after **38...♗b7 39.♕xf7 ♕d8 40.f5 ♕d1+ 41.♔f2 ♕d2+ 42.♔f1 ♗a6+** How could White have saved the draw?

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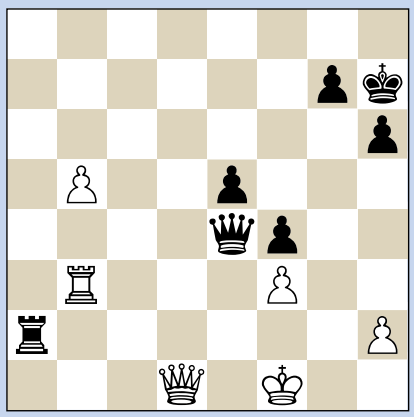

2. Black to play

Black chose the natural **44...♕g6** when the rook ending after **45.♕d3! ♕xd3+ 46.♖xd3 ♖b2 47.♖d5 ♖xh2 48.♖xe5 ♖b2 49.♔e1** brought no more than a draw. What did Black miss?

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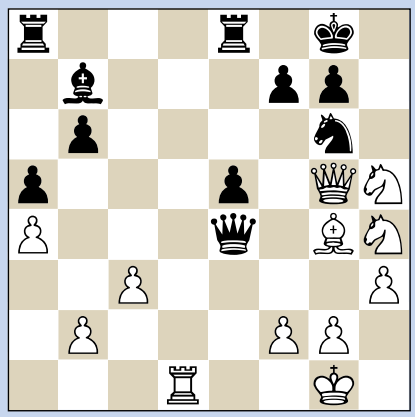

3. White to play

White played the modest **25.♔h2** to convert an evident edge, allowing Black to put up stubborn resistance with **25...f6!? 26.♕xg6 ♕xg6 27.♘xg6 ♖ed8** Was there a more straightforward route?

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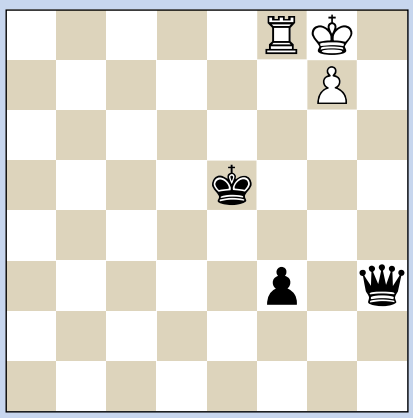

4. Black to play

Black continued **81...♕h5** and was stunned by his opponent's justified claim of a threefold repetition after **82.♖f7**. Barring this fact, what is the winning plan in the diagrammed position?

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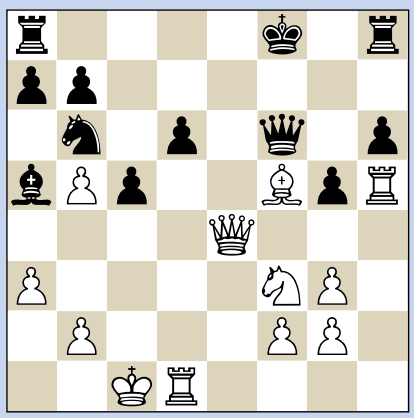

5. White to play

White spoiled a winning position with **21.♗e6 d5 22.♗xd5 ♖e8 23.♕c2 ♔g7 24.♗xb7 ♕f7 25.♖dh1 ♕xb7 26.b4 cxb4 27.♕b2+ ♔f7 28.♘e5+ ♖xe5 29.♕xe5 ♖c8+ 30.♔b1 ♕d7** and even threw away the draw with **31.♕e4?** (31.♖xh6!). How would Morphy, Tal (and you!) handle this golden opportunity?

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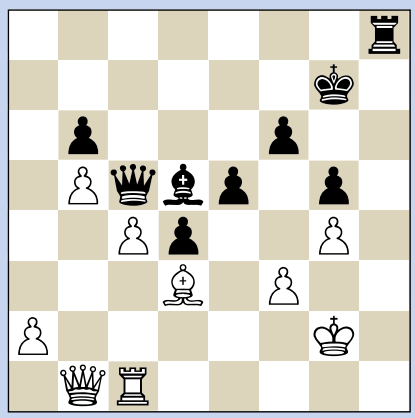


6. Black to play

Black 'sensibly' retreated his attacked bishop: **43...♗f7** and the game ended peacefully after **44.♖h1 ♖xh1 45.♕xh1 ♗g6 46.♗xg6 ♔xg6 47.♕h5+ ♔g7 48.♕e8 ♕xc4 49.a4 ♕c2+ 50.♔g3 ♕c7 51.♕c6 ♕d8 52.a5 bxa5 53.b6 d3 54.♕c7+ ♕xc7 55.bxc7 d2 56.c8♕ d1♕ 57.♕c7+ ♔h6 58.♕e7 ♕g1+ 59.♔h3**. Could Black have done better?

The number of stars roughly indicates their estimated level of difficulty: 1 is easiest and 5 most difficult. Solutions on page 73

NEW IN CHESS

All about Aronian

Grandmasters meet Dutch Masters. For Round 4 the Tata Steel Tournament moved to the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum. Before the games the players posed for a group portrait in front of Rembrandt's *Nightwatch*.

He calls it his favourite tournament and he has every reason to. In a mighty display of eagerness and creativity Levon Aronian won the **Tata Steel Chess Tournament** for the fourth time. Playing with enviable ease, the Armenian swept the field and claimed first place with one round to spare. Even an unexpected last-round loss couldn't spoil his mood. Our reporter, **Anish Giri**, also left Wijk aan Zee in high spirits. Holland's number one shared second place with Sergey Karjakin and picked up precious rating points. At age 76, the Tata Steel tournament remains vital and innovative. For the first time in its rich history the grandmasters went 'on tour', playing one round at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and one at the High Tech Campus in Eindhoven.

The Tata Steel Chess Tournament in Wijk aan Zee occupies a special place in the heart of all chess lovers, including the very best of us. For good reason, as it isn't for nothing that the tournament by the Dutch seaside is often called the Wimbledon of chess. In the month of January, the little coastal village is filled with chess, chess and more chess as countless numbers of enthusiasts come by daily to watch and discuss the games of the strongest chess players in the world or play themselves in one of the many side-events.

This year, due to serious budget cuts, the tournament underwent several

changes. The top group, now called Tata Steel Masters, was reduced from 14 players to 12, while the traditional B and C groups merged in the Challengers, with 14 players. The organizers tackled the financial restraints they faced with creativity, and introduced the 'Chess on Tour' concept. For the first time in the rich history of the tournament two rounds were played outside Wijk aan Zee. Round 4 was played in the world-famous Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, where chess grandmasters met Old Dutch Masters, while for Round 9 we travelled to the High Tech Campus of Eindhoven, the 'Silicon Valley of Holland'. If this was done with hopes of attracting extra media attention, and of course it was, the organizers definitely got what they wanted.

Despite its reduced size, the list of participants was impressive. To get to Wijk aan Zee you have to be either terribly highly rated, or terribly interesting as a player (or you have to be me ☺). It was great to see spectacular players like Richard Rapport and Arkadij Naiditsch next to 'usual suspects' like Levon Aronian, Hikaru Nakamura, Sergey Karjakin, Boris Gelfand, Fabiano Caruana, Leinier Dominguez, and so on. And while most of the time these swashbucklers committed spectacular hara-kiris, from time to time they also ended up on the lucky side of the chaos they were creating on the board. Let me complete the list of players and mention the usual Dutch guest Loek van Wely, who lately seems to have found out that it is also possible to play in Wijk aan Zee without actually getting mated in the opening. He even treated the spectators to some positional jewels. And there was Pentala Harikrishna, who is gradually emerging out of the shadow of the great Indian legend Vishy Anand and slowly but surely moving up in the world rankings. And last but not least, I should introduce the Philippine star Wesley So, who recently moved to the USA and seems to be getting more and more confident, most likely thanks to beating the guys at Webster University (Le Quang, Meier and other blitz legends) in night-long blitz sessions. Wesley has also moved up in the rankings recently and now enjoys a solid and stable 2700+ rating.

'He is dangerously well-prepared, with lots of semi-correct ideas supported by deep computer analysis.'

Since Magnus was on one of his PR tours (and he is good at that, too), somebody had to claim the role of the tournament hero and it was hardly a surprise when the world's number two, Levon Aronian, started winning game after game. 'It is just that everything was somehow going my way,' is a sentence I just made up, and *not* his quote, but it could very well have been. Indeed, Levon was sometimes winning effortlessly and sometimes not, but he was just winning, game after game. What can I say? He is good. He is dangerously well-prepared, with lots of semi-correct ideas supported by deep computer analysis. Which he doesn't especially need to remember, thanks to his great bluffing skills. He always fights for the initiative, has an excellent feel for dynamics, can't count pawns (or doesn't want to?!), doesn't mind giving you half of his pieces and dreams of giving his queen away. Stuff like that. On top of it all, he can convert a slightly better endgame and so it's often hard to find the right key to him. Add to it good form (= confidence), the right venue (before this one, Levon had already won the tournament three times!), finally add a dash of luck, and then you, my dear reader, will perhaps realize why Levon managed to dominate the field.

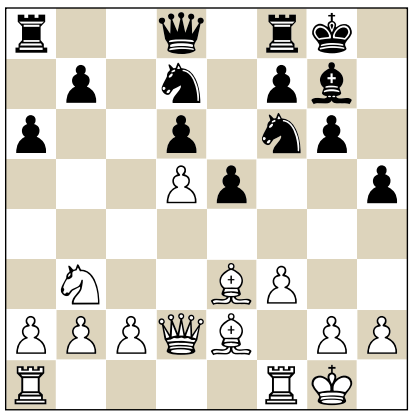
That wasn't clear right from the start, though. In Round 1, Harikrishna played a solid game against Levon, Nakamura got a free point from Naiditsch, who committed suicide, and Caruana started off with a beautiful (though in my opinion somewhat overrated) victory against Boris. The comments on all kinds of websites are nice to read, but none of them answered the question I was asking myself while passing by their board (if you see my first-round game, you will realize why I spent most of my time thinking about other positions. It was bo-ooo-ring).

SI 14.1 – B90
Fabiano Caruana
Boris Gelfand
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (1)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.f3 e5 7.♘b3 ♗e6 8.♗e3 h5 9.♘d5 ♗xd5 10.exd5 ♘bd7 11.♕d2 g6 12.♗e2 ♗g7 13.0-0 0-0

NEW IN CHESS

Fabiano Caruana started with a great win against Boris Gelfand.

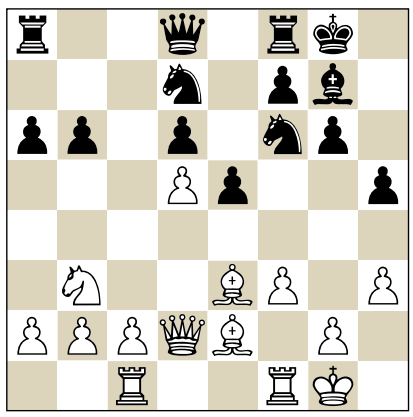


14.♖ac1!? A rare move, you say? Well my engine database says 786 games. Yep, chess is doomed ☺.
Now, let's look at it from a human point of view. What does White want? In general, he can play on the queenside. He could try c4 and ♘a1, a typical idea; the knight often travels via c2-a3 to b5 (after Black has played ...a6-a5). In his turn Black can create some counterplay thanks to the idea of ...e4!?, f4, ...♘g4, known to me since a brilliant Leko-Topalov game from ages ago (I advise you to have a look at it). Another way for Black is to get his kingside pawns rolling with something like ...♘h7, ...f5. Except for these two, Black has in fact no other strategic ideas, or so it seems to me. So it makes sense for White to prepare for that with h3 and an eventual g4. After h3, however, he has to watch out for ...h4, pointing out the temporary weaknesses of the dark squares.
The point behind White's move is obvious after the following line: 14. c4 e4 15.f4 ♘g4 16.♗xg4 hxg4 17.f5 ♘e5 18.fxg6 f5!, when the e5-knight is heading towards the juicy d3-square.
14.h3 was avoided by Fabiano due to 14...h4!? 15.♗g5 ♕c7 16.♗xh4 ♘b6, where 243 engine games prove that Black has excellent compensation for the pawn. OK, don't get scared, those scary numbers are mostly to be found in the Najdorf. For some reason people love testing their engines in the Najdorf. It's one of those fashion things.

14...b6

Meeting c4 in advance.
14...e4 15.f4 ♘g4 16.♗xg4 hxg4 17. f5 is very dangerous: 17...♗xb2, and now just 18.♖ce1, and nobody will count pawns, while mate is coming.

15.h3



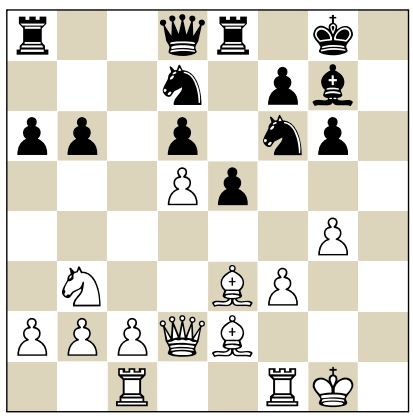
Still 36 engine games, by the way. This one is really sneaky. Fabiano wants to get g4 in, using the fact that 15... h4 is now out of the question, since the idea of ♘b6 is no longer there.
15.c4!? already makes a lot of sense, as 15...e4 is now bad due to 16.♘d4!.

15...♖e8!?

Caruana called this move pointless, but in fact it had a deep point that Boris hadn't noticed either.
Fabiano had probably mostly looked at 15...♕c7, when White can indeed start with 16.g4!?, as now the idea of ...b5 is just not in the position: 16... hxg4 17.hxg4 b5 18.c4!, with a clear white advantage.
15...h4 runs into 16.♗g5!.

16.g4? This is just premature. White didn't grasp the subtleties.
16.c4! had to be played first. Or 16.a4!?.

16...hxg4 17.hxg4



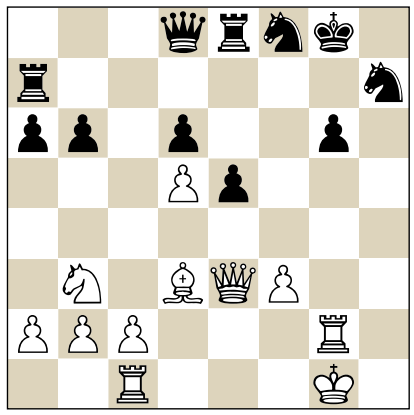
17...♘h7? When looking at the position during the game, I was seriously wondering what Fabiano wanted to reply after 17...b5!, threatening the thematic ...♘b6. I am still looking for an answer, as the computer is also refusing to give it to me. For example, after 18.♘a5, 18...♘xd5! is typical as well, since 19.♘c6 doesn't win a piece due to the common trick 19...♕c7 20.♕xd5 ♘f6. Leinier Dominguez, a great expert of the ...h5 Najdorf, would have played ...b5...

18.g5! From here on in, Fabiano played a great game, which made all of us fear the day we would face him.

18...f5 19.gxf6 ♗xf6 20.♖f2 ♗g5 21.♖g2 ♗xe3+ 22.♕xe3

Black is reasonably happy to trade off the dark-squared bishops, but he is just not in time to consolidate. His position is collapsing.

22...♘df8 23.♗d3 ♖a7



24.♖f1

NEW IN CHESS

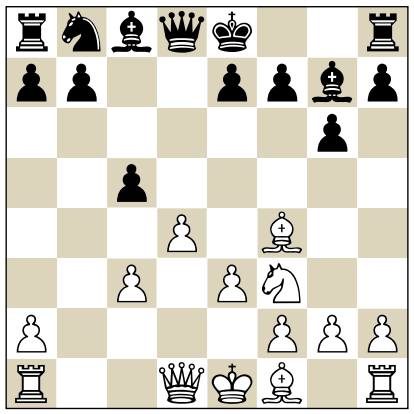
And now we're also on iPad! Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam presented Garry Kasparov with the 'first issue'.

This one impressed Yasser Seirawan, the commentator of the day, especially.
24...♖f7 25.♕h6 ♔h8 26.♘d2 ♖f4 27.♖g4 b5 28.♘e4 ♘d7 29.♖xg6 ♖g8 30.♘g5
Black resigned.

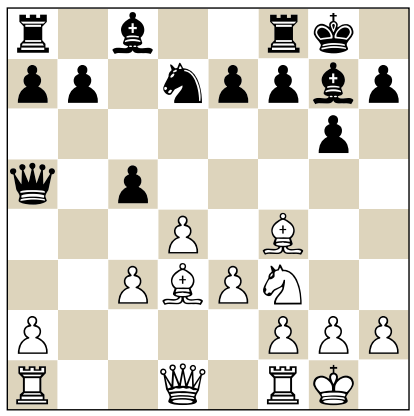
However, in the second round Levon Aronian made a big statement by beating Fabiano, who had been shining just the day before.

EO 42.5 – A34
Levon Aronian
Fabiano Caruana
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (2)

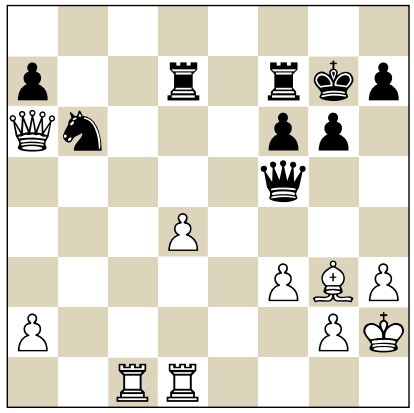
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.d4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 g6 7.♗f4
Pretty harmless, as was proved the next day, when in the Challengers, Benjamin Bok equalized against Sabino Brunello and even went on to win a nice game with black.
7...♗g7 8.e3



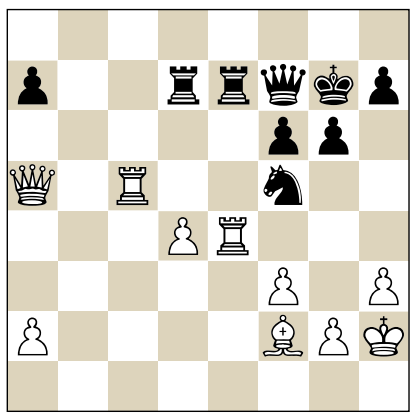
8...0-0?
If Black wants to put his queen on a5, which he generally should want to, he should do it now: 8...♕a5. This forces 9.♕d2. The difference is obvious: 9...0-0 (the afore-mentioned game Brunello-Bok saw 9...♗f5!? 10.♗e2 ♘c6 11.0-0 0-0 12.♖fd1 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♕xd2 14.♘xd2 e5 15.dxe5 ♘xe5 16.e4 ♗e6, and Black was better and went on to win) 10.♗d3 ♘d7 11.0-0, and now after 11...cxd4! White would really like to have his queen on c2.
9.♗d3 ♘d7 10.0-0 ♕a5



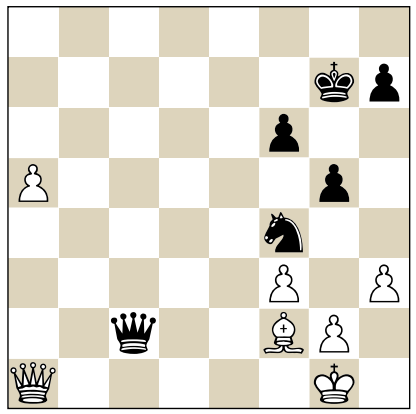
11.♕c2!
Now Black doesn't solve his opening problems and White has a nagging edge. And Levon doesn't need much more.
11...cxd4 12.cxd4 e5 13.♗g3 exd4 14.♘xd4 ♘b6 15.♕c7! ♗xd4 16.exd4 ♗f5 17.♗xf5 ♕xf5 18.♕xb7 ♖fd8 19.♖fd1 ♖d7 20.♕a6 ♕e4 21.♗e5 ♖f8 22.h3 f6 23.♗g3 ♖ff7 24.f3 ♕f5 25.♖ac1 ♔g7 26.♔h2
White's advantage is getting serious.



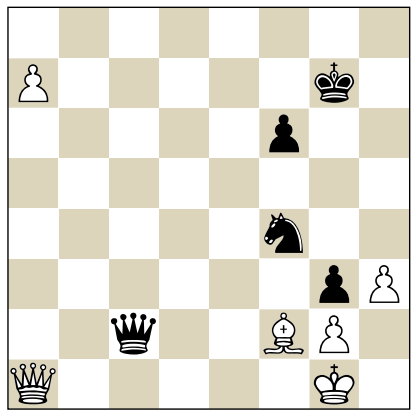
26...♖fe7 27.♖c5 ♘d5 28.♕a5 ♕e6 29.♖e1 ♕f7 30.♖e4 ♘e3 31.♗f2 ♘f5



32.♕d2?
Oops.
32...♖e6?
Black missed 32...♖xe4 33.fxe4 ♕e7!, with a cute double attack. After 34.♕c2 ♘xd4 35.♕a4! White keeps some pressure, but I believe this wasn't Levon's idea.
33.♖xe6 ♕xe6 34.d5 ♕d6+ 35.♔g1 ♖b7 36.♕e1 ♘e7 37.♖a5 ♘xd5 38.♕d1 ♖d7 39.♖xa7 ♖xa7 40.♗xa7 g5 41.a4 ♕a6 42.♗d4 ♕c4 43.♕a1 ♕c2 44.a5 ♘f4 45.♗f2



45...♘e2+
After the game Levon said that Fabiano still had a chance: 45...h5 46.a6 g4 47.fxg4 hxg4 48.a7 g3,



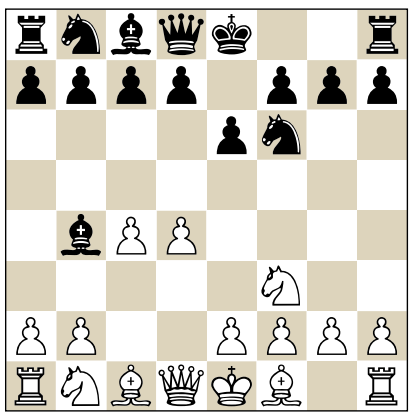
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

but the Armenian genius probably didn't take enough time to realize that he could reverse the move order here: 49.♔h1!!, and wins (and not 49.a8♕? ♘xh3+! 50.♔h1 ♘xf2+ 51.♔g1 ♘h3+, and indeed it's a draw).
46.♔h2 ♘f4 47.♕f1 ♘d3 48.♗d4 ♕d2 49.♗g1 ♕f4+ 50.♔h1 ♕c4 51.♕a1 ♕c2 52.♗e3 h6 53.a6 ♕e2 54.♕g1 ♕a2 55.a7 ♘b4 56.♕d1 ♘d5 57.♕d2 ♕a1+ 58.♗g1
Black resigned.

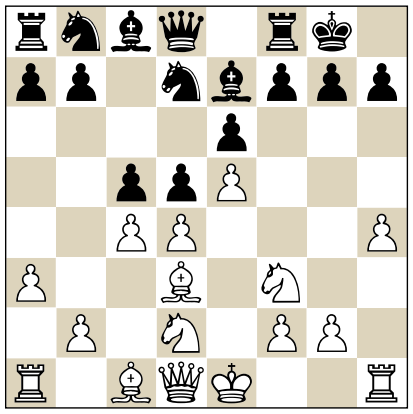
Yours truly also won his game, but it was hardly a statement. More a little happy moment for the New In Chess contributing editor.

QI 1.11 – E11
Anish Giri
Arkadij Naiditsch
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (2)

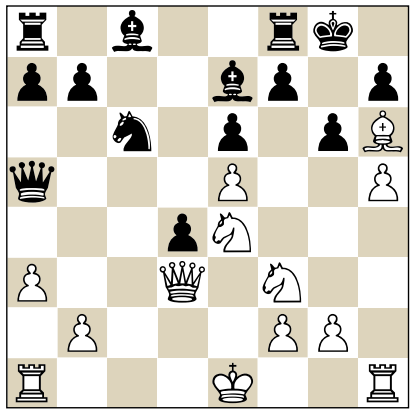
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♗b4+?!
Perhaps this move in itself is not so bad, but you've got to know what you are doing, especially at this stage of the development in this opening.



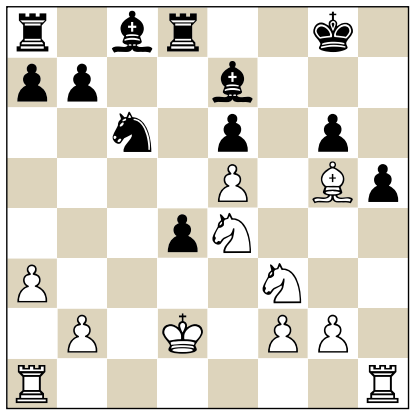
4.♘bd2
Now Black either gives up the bishop pair after the eventual a3, or he has to give up the centre.
4...0-0 5.a3 ♗e7 6.e4 d5 7.e5 ♘fd7 8.♗d3 c5 9.h4
The modern way. White is going for the attack!



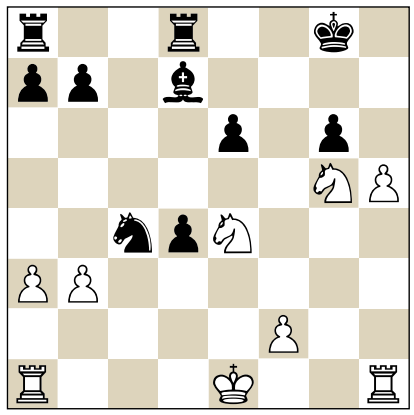
9...g6 As I said before, to survive this position Black really has to have a clear plan in mind. My opponent, as it turned out, hadn't.
10.h5 cxd4 11.♕c2 ♘c5 12.cxd5 ♘xd3+ 13.♕xd3 ♕xd5 14.♘e4 ♘c6 15.♗h6! ♕a5+?



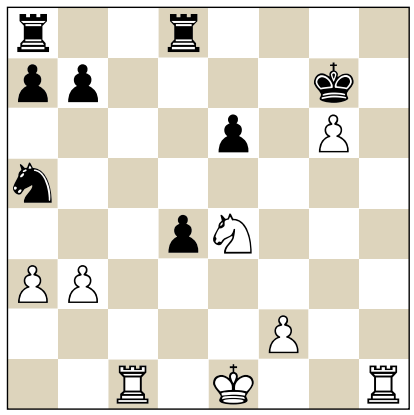
16.♕d2!! I was very, very happy with this move, which only occurred to me after a pretty long think.
At first I deeply calculated 16.♔f1, then 16.♔e2, then I noticed 16.♔d1, and finally I started looking for some ridiculous alternatives, covering the king with all possible pieces from the check, just to be sure that I was not missing something. And then I noticed that, hey, without queens my attack runs even faster.
16...♕xd2+ 17.♔xd2
Now Black has just no counterplay and the attack is devastating.
17...♖d8 18.hxg6 fxg6 19.♗g5
Hitting all the dark squares. Black is lost.
19...h5



20.g4?? Here the game took a wrong turn, as I had some hallucinations. Fortunately I won anyway, but the rest of the game is hardly something to be happy about.
Simple and deadly was 20.♗xe7 ♘xe7 21.g4.
20...♗xg5+ 21.♘fxg5 ♘xe5
Suddenly Black has some counterplay.
22.gxh5 ♘c4+ 23.♔e1 ♗d7 24.b3



24...♘a5?
Missing a good chance: 24...♘e5! 25.f4 ♘f7 26.hxg6 ♘xg5 27.♘xg5 ♔g7 28.♘f7 ♖f8 29.♘e5 ♖h8, and Black holds.
25.♖c1! ♗c6
25...♘xb3 runs into 26.hxg6! ♘xc1 27.♖h7 ♖f8 28.♘f7, with mate coming soon.
26.hxg6 ♗xe4 27.♘xe4 ♔g7

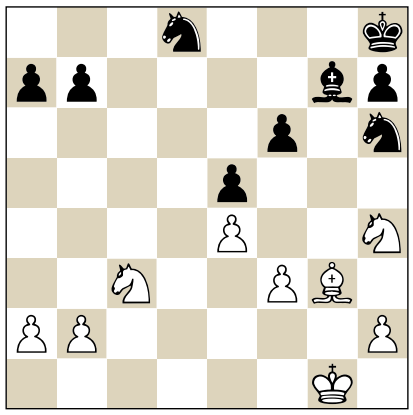


28.♖c7+ ♔xg6 29.♖g1+ ♔f5 30.f3 e5 31.♖g5+ ♔f4 32.♔f2 ♖f8 33.♖h7 Black resigned.

A draw with Rapport in Round 3 turned out to be merely a short pause in Levon's campaign. Speaking of pauses, in fact we had more than enough of them, having five(!) rest days for just 11 games. They were given to us in order to prepare and recover from our travels (remember the Chess on Tour thing!). I believe these rest days were more necessary for the organizers, who had to move their equipment from one place to the other, than for the players, since after all we didn't go to Wijk aan Zee to have a holiday... On the other hand, however, rest days are like chocolates. The more the better.

As said, in Round 4 we went to the Rijksmuseum. I have never seen so many photographers. Some old Indian legend could have it that if you printed out all these photographs, they could easily cover the surface of the whole Earth. For Aronian such attention only gives him an extra boost. He won a smooth game against Hikaru Nakamura, who definitely has to prove something after he replaced Magnus on the New In Chess cover (apparently New In Chess also sells without Magnus on the cover. It even does so on the iPad...).

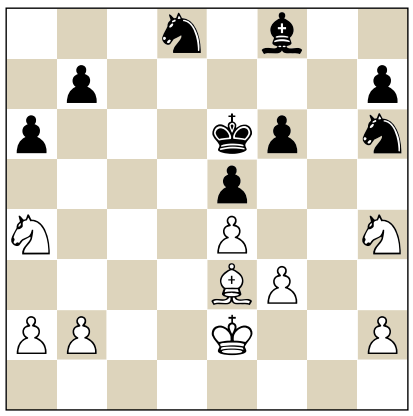
I especially liked the idea of exchanging the bishop in return for knight domination.



Aronian-Nakamura
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (4)
position after 23...♘xd8

At this moment I looked at this game and I think I heard Hikaru offer a draw here. I was so shocked that I could no longer focus on my game. No wonder I couldn't win that day ☺.

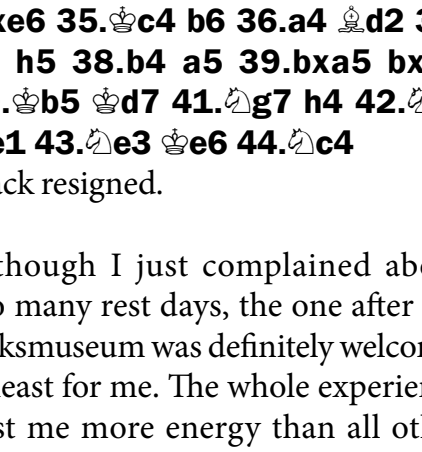
24.♗f2 a6 25.♔f1 ♔g8 26.♔e2 ♔f7 27.♗e3 ♔e6 28.♘a4 ♗f8



29.♗xh6!!

You may say there are more spectacular ♗xh6's, but this one shows a true understanding of the game.

29...♗xh6 30.♘c5+ ♔f7



31.♔d3! This is the point. White supports the c5-knight with his king and Black can't stop the invasion. Note that the b7-pawn, as well as the knight on d8, are tied up due to this powerful knight on c5.

I have to admit that I hadn't seen this coming and assumed Levon would chase the bishop with ♘f5 and ♘d7. Black is on the verge of losing here, and although Levon played it too safe later on and Black achieved some sort of a fortress, White was anyway fortunate enough to win the game.

31.♘f5 ♗f8 32.♘d7 is of course nothing: 32...♘e6 33.♘xf8 ♔xf8 34.♔d3 ♘g5, and Black holds.

31...♗f4

31...♗f8 32.♔c4! is the idea. The knight is hard to bear, but exchanging it would allow White's king to penetrate the position.

32.h3 ♗g5 33.♘f5 ♘e6 34.♘xe6 ♔xe6 35.♔c4 b6 36.a4 ♗d2 37.b3 h5 38.b4 a5 39.bxa5 bxa5 40.♔b5 ♔d7 41.♘g7 h4 42.♘f5 ♗e1 43.♘e3 ♔e6 44.♘c4

Black resigned.

Although I just complained about too many rest days, the one after the Rijksmuseum was definitely welcome, at least for me. The whole experience cost me more energy than all other games put together, and I was glad that I got time to get ready for the remainder of the tournament.

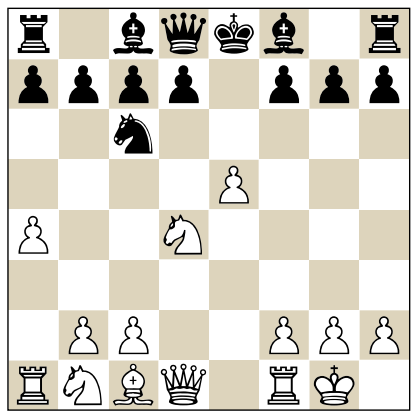
After that rest day Aronian and I both won our games, and so I moved up to second place. Exciting as it may sound, I never got higher than the +2 I now had, but let's not reveal everything at once.

Levon won a very interesting game. Interesting in the sense that I still don't understand what was happening. Perhaps we can look at this peculiar game the way I saw it – as a playing spectator.

RL 7.4 – C67
Arkadij Naiditsch
Levon Aronian
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (5)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.d4 ♘d6 6.dxe5 ♘xb5 7.a4 ♘bd4 8.♘xd4

This is known to force a draw. As if you need to force a draw against the Berlin ☺.



8...d6

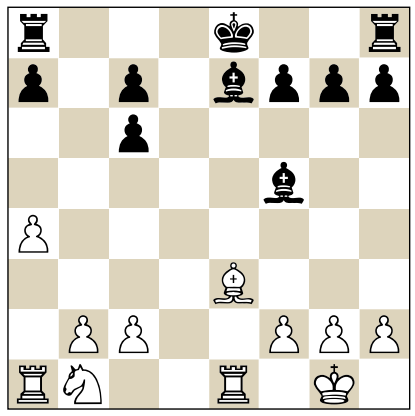
A surprise, although seeing names like Sargissian and Pashikian in the database could make one suspicious...

9.exd6 ♗xd6 10.♖e1+ ♗e7 11.♘xc6 Interesting is 11.♗g5!?.

11...♕xd1 12.♖xd1 bxc6 13.♗e3

And here 13.♗f4!? is a possibility.

13...♗f5 14.♖e1



In the final weekend Garry Kasparov visited Wijk aan Zee. Tournament director Jeroen van den Berg didn't forget to point out that the huge photo next to the stage shows a position from his legendary win against Topalov in 1999.

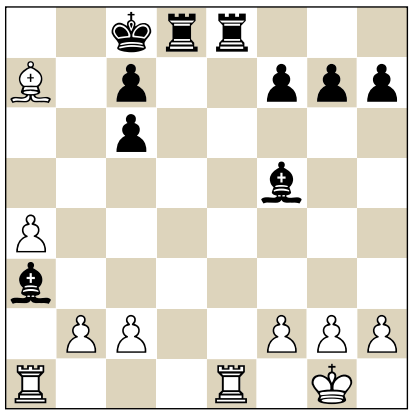
14...0-0-0

This was were I started watching the game. Levon played it without hesitation. He was up on the clock somewhat.

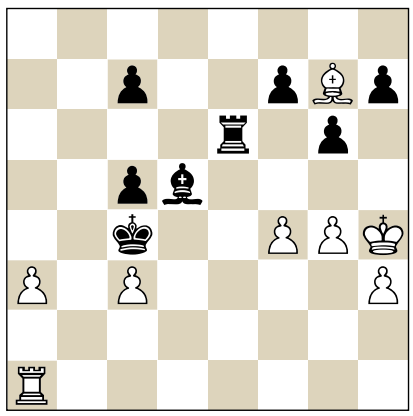
14...0-0!? also looks fine for Black.

15.♘a3 ♖he8 16.♗xa7 ♗xa3

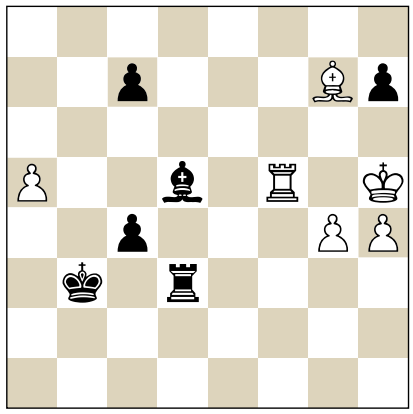
The position looks equal. I saw this moment too, played with a sigh. Black was up on the clock somewhat.



17.♖xe8 ♖xe8 18.bxa3 ♖e4 19.c3 ♖xa4 20.♗d4 g6 21.f3 ♔d7 22.♔f2 ♔d6 23.h3 c5 24.♗f6 ♔d5 25.g4 ♗e6 26.♔g3 ♔c4 27.♔h4 ♗d5 28.f4 ♖a6 29.♗g7 ♖e6 This was the next position I saw. Black was up on the clock quite a bit. To be honest, I couldn't figure out who was playing for a win.

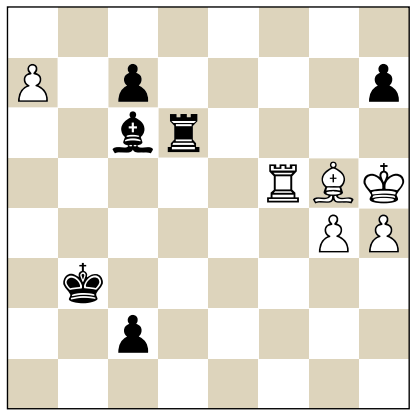


30.a4 f6 31.a5 g5+ 32.♔h5 gxf4 33.♖a4+ ♔xc3 34.♖xf4 ♔b3 35.♖xf6 ♖e3 36.h4 c4 37.♖f5 ♖d3



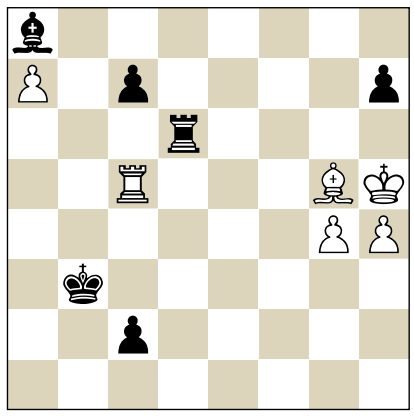
This was another moment I saw. Black had, like, an hour more. I still couldn't figure out who was playing for a win.

38.a6 c3 39.a7 c2 40.♗h6 ♗c6 41.♗g5 ♖d6



This was one more moment I saw. Black was up on the clock. I still couldn't figure out who was playing for a win.

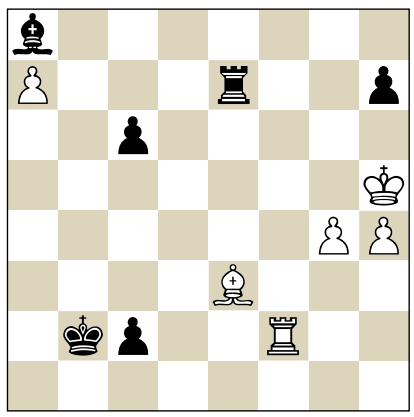
42.♖e5 ♗a8 43.♖c5



43...c6!

I saw Levon playing this move proudly. He was still up on time. By now I started to get the feeling that Black was not risking anything.

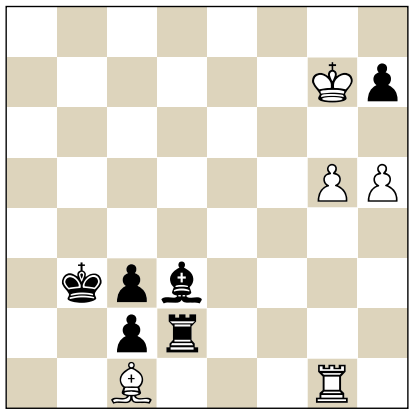
44.♖f5 ♖d7 45.♖f3+ ♔a2 46.♖f2 ♔b2 47.♗e3 ♖e7



The next moment I saw the position. Now I figured that Black was winning. He was, by the way, still up on the clock.

48.♗f4 ♖xa7 49.♖f1 c5 50.♔h6 ♗e4 51.h5 ♗d3 52.♖g1 c4 53.g5

c3 54.♗c1+ ♔b3 55.♗e3 ♖e7 56.♗c1 ♖e2 57.♔g7 ♖d2
White resigned. What, how, why, I still don't understand.



After this I was no longer surprised to see Levon beating Wesley So. He claimed it had something to do with the opening. I think it had something to do with the fact that he was simply on a roll. Wesley So just collapsed and started shaking his head well before the game started.

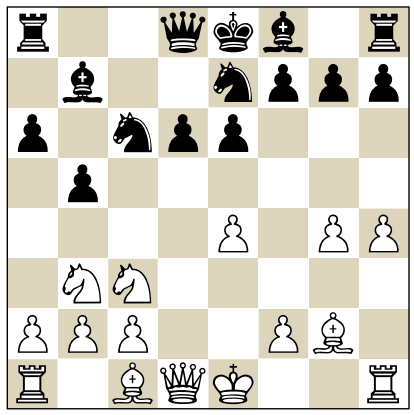
In the meantime, Karjakin was having ups and downs, and so was Caruana. They both periodically joined me in second place. However, no one was playing well enough to fight for first place and Levon's lead was never in any doubt.

In the next round Aronian didn't win, but the crowd saw Van Wely come back with a spectacular victory over Hikaru Nakamura.

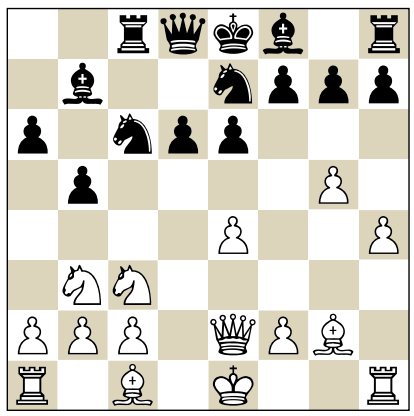
NOTES BY
Loek van Wely

SI 39.11 – B54
Hikaru Nakamura
Loek van Wely
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (7)

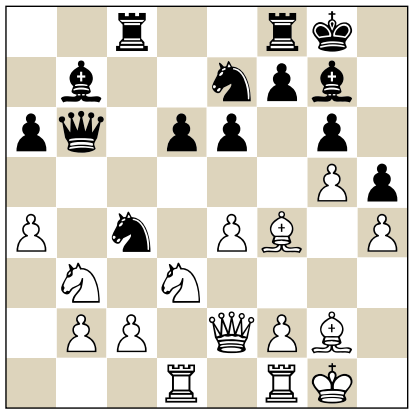
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 d6 6.g4 ♘ge7
6...a6 may have been more accurate, to hold back the knight on g8. However, if you are result-oriented, Black shouldn't complain too much.
7.♘b3 a6 8.h4 b5 9.♗g2 ♗b7



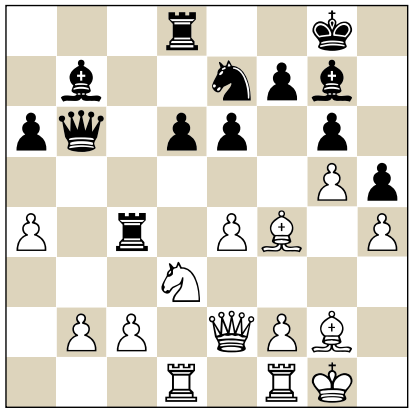
10.g5 If your plan is to push your pawns first, then 10.h5 makes much more sense. At least it prevents any knight re-routing, e.g. ...♘g6-e5-c4 or ..♘g6-h4. It also stops any ...h6/h5 plans, as in the game, or even ...g6, which also was an option in the game.
10...♖c8 11.♕e2



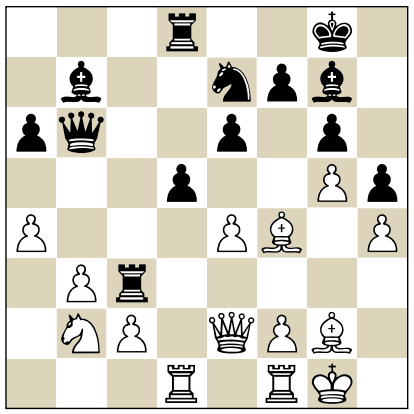
11...h5
I played this ambitious move after a long think. I just want to fianchetto my bishop on g7, without being harassed by any h5-h6. However, it does cost time, and Hikaru seeks immediate counterplay on the queenside.
Another, possibly better, option would have been 11...♘a5! 12.♖h3, and here Black has many options: 12...b4 (the most direct approach, attacking the centre), 12...h6 (attacking the kingside!), 12...♘c4 (putting the knight on the best square), and 12...h5 (closing the kingside!).
12.a4 b4 13.♘a2 g6
13...d5 required some calculation, so that was not an option ☺.
14.♗f4 ♗g7 15.♖d1 ♘e5 16.♘xb4 ♘c4 17.♘d3 ♕b6 18.0-0 0-0 Time to take stock after the opening: on the one hand I wasn't too happy, simply because I felt I should have got more out of the opening. On the other hand, I am still not being mated, nor will there be mate in the near future ☺. Although I am a pawn down, I do have some initiative. That in itself is not so important; more important is that Hikaru doesn't have the initiative!



19.♘d2 ♖fd8 19...a5, taking the bishop to a6, would have made sense, but so does the text-move. Black is preparing ...d5 at the right time.
20.♘xc4 ♖xc4

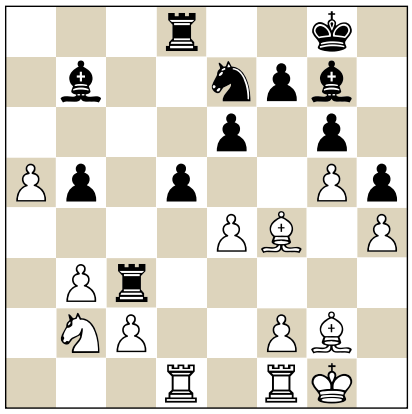


21.♘e5!? Trying to change the character of the game, which is usually not a bad idea if you don't like the position you are facing. After the game, Hikaru said that he should have played 21.b3. However, after 21...♖c3 22.♘b2 d5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

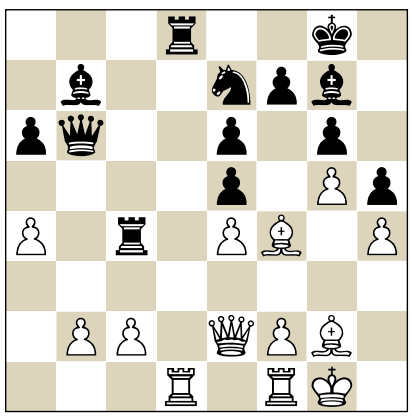
we reach the critical position. My intuition, for what's it worth, told me that Black should be doing fine. Indeed, it's now up to White to show something, otherwise he will get crushed. During the game I didn't spend too much energy on trying to find moves for my opponent. Better to watch closely the games of my rivals Naiditsch, Rapport and Gelfand ☺. 23.a5! seems like the only move, according to my Beast: 23...♕b5! 24.♕xb5 axb5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and now that White's knight on b2 looks stupid, I believe in Black's chances. However, my silicon friend naturally disagrees and shows some small tactics to support its case: 25.♘d3! dxe4 26.a6 ♗xa6 (or 26...♗a8 27.♘c5! ♘d5 28.♘xe4 ♖xc2 29.a7) 27.♘b4 ♖xd1 28.♖xd1 ♗b7 29.♖d8+ ♗f8 30.♖b8 ♗d5 31.♗f1, and it's White who is calling the shots here.

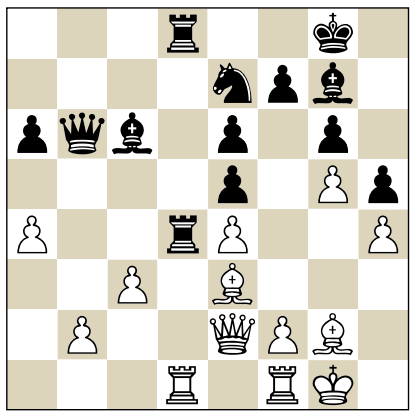
21...dxe5



22.♗e3

Interesting was 22.♕xc4?! ♖xd1 23.♖xd1 exf4 24.♖d7 ♘c6 25.♕b3!, but after 25...♕a5 Black has at least a draw: 26.♕xb7 ♕e1+ 27.♗f1 ♘e5, and when your opponent has at least a draw, it means you can still lose!

22...♖cd4 23.c3 ♗c6



My original intention was to play 23...a5, but then I got a bit worried that after 24.cxd4 exd4 25.♕b5 ♕a7 26.♗f4 e5 27.♗g3 ♗a6 28.♕xa5 ♘c6 29.♕d2 ♗xf1 30.♗xf1 ♕xa4 31.♖c1 a white bishop might land on c4, which was something I was definitely not going to like!

24.b3?? A double question mark, not because the move is *that* bad, but because it's simply incomprehensible. Hikaru must have missed something about which I can only speculate.

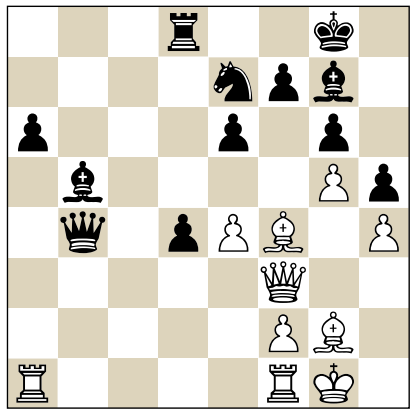
He should have played 24.♕c2! ♖c8 25.cxd4 exd4 26.♗f4 ♗d7, and Black has compensation for the exchange.

24...♕xb3 25.cxd4 exd4 26.♗f4

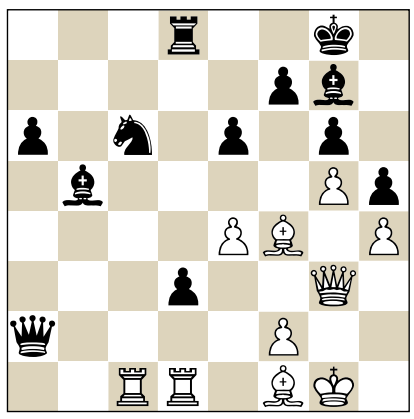
26.♕xa6 loses to 26...♖a8.

26...♕xa4 Better was 26...d3.

27.♕f3 ♗b5 28.♖a1 ♕b4



29.♖fd1 d3 30.♖ab1 ♕a3 31.♗f1 ♘c6 32.♕g3 ♕a2 33.♖bc1



33...d2!

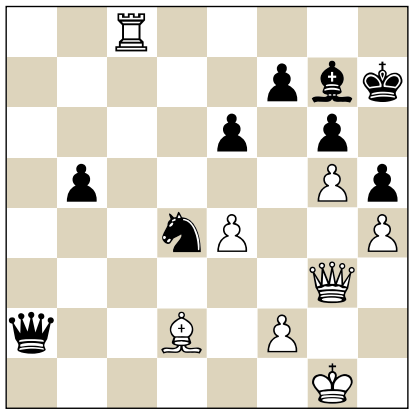
White is clearly in serious trouble, but I was getting short of time. Now the question was whether I should try and consolidate or try to calculate some lines till the end? I'm not sure if

NEW IN CHESS

Loek van Wely and his wife Lorena. The Dutchman made sure that Hikaru Nakamura didn't get the initiative and won an excellent game.

it was the most practical decision, but no guts, no glory ☺.

34.♖xd2 ♖xd2 35.♗xb5 axb5 36.♗xd2 ♘d4 37.♖c8+ ♔h7

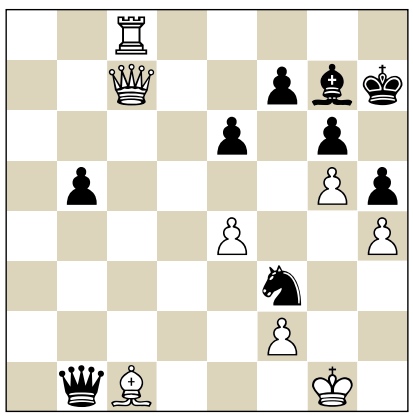


38.♕c7 I know Hikaru as a very resilient and resourceful player, but this one I had seen coming! One of the points was 38.♕d3 ♕xd2 39.♕xd2 ♘f3+.

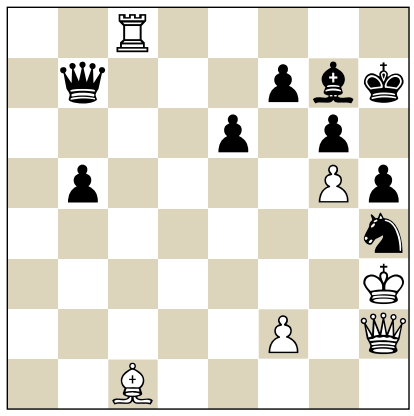
38...♕b1+! Ignoring the bishop and eyeing White's lonely king! A serious error was 38...♕xd2? 39.♕xf7, and Black is forced to go for a perpetual.

39.♗c1 After 39.♔h2 ♗e5+ was another point: 40.♕xe5 ♘f3+.

39...♘f3+



40.♔g2 ♘xh4+ 41.♔h3 ♕xe4 42.♕f4 ♕h1+ 43.♕h2 ♕b7!

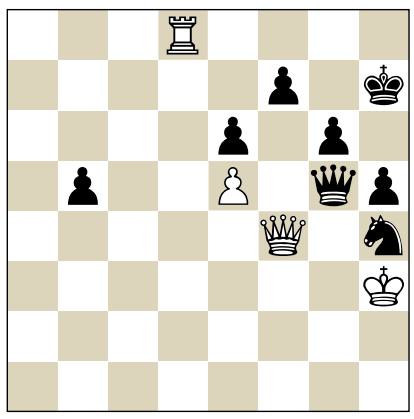


44.♖d8 Or 44.♖c7 ♕f3+ 45.♕g3 ♕h1+ 46.♕h2 ♕xh2+ 47.♔xh2 ♗e5+, and Black wins. Or 44.♖c5 ♗d4!, and White's rook is running out of squares on the c-file: 45.♖c2 ♕f3+ 46.♕g3 ♕f5+, winning.

44...♗e5! 45.f4 ♕f3+ 46.♕g3 ♕h1+ 47.♕h2 ♕f3+ 48.♕g3 ♕h1+ 49.♕h2 ♕xc1 50.fxe5

Or 50.♔xh4 ♗xf4 51.♕g2 ♗xg5+ 52.♕xg5 ♕h1+ 53.♔g3 ♕g1+ 54.♔f4 ♕c1+, and the queen drops.

50...♕xg5 51.♕f4!



An ultimate attempt to trick me!

51...♕xd8 The rook was too juicy, but more beautiful would have been 51...♕g2+ 52.♔xh4 g5+ 53.♕xg5 ♕h2 mate.

Of course I didn't fall for 51...♕xf4? 52.♖h8+! ♔g7 53.♖g8+ ♔h6 54.♖h8+ ♔g5 55.♖xh5+, with stalemate and a draw.

52.♕xf7+ ♔h6 White resigned.

■ ■ ■

The next day Sergey Karjakin played what he considered to be his best game.

NOTES BY
Sergey Karjakin

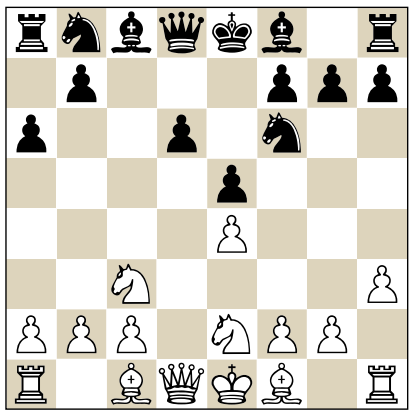
SI 14.12 – B90
Sergey Karjakin
Boris Gelfand
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (8)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6

Before this game there was a free day, in which I spent about five hours preparing for 2...♘c6, and although the idea of preparing for the Najdorf occurred to me, I rejected it without any great thought.

3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.h3 Two years ago in Wijk I tried 6.♗e3 against Boris, but without success, to put it mildly.

6...e5 7.♘de2



7...h5

The most fashionable reply! Black does not allow g2-g4 and he restricts White's forces.

8.g3 b5

Wijk aan Zee Masters 2014 — **cat. XX**

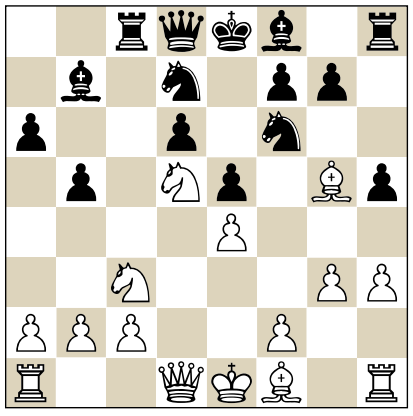
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		TPR
1	Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2812	*	½	1	1	1	1	½	0	1	½	½	1	8	2911
2	Anish Giri	IGM	NED	2734	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	6½	2809
3	Sergey Karjakin	IGM	RUS	2759	0	½	*	½	0	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	6½	2806
4	Leinier Dominguez	IGM	CUB	2754	0	½	½	*	1	1	0	½	½	½	1	½	6	2778
5	Fabiano Caruana	IGM	ITA	2782	0	½	1	0	*	½	½	1	½	1	1	0	6	2775
6	Wesley So	IGM	PHI	2719	0	½	½	0	½	*	½	1	½	1	1	½	6	2781
7	Pentala Harikrishna	IGM	IND	2706	½	0	½	1	½	½	*	½	1	0	0	1	5½	2746
8	Loek van Wely	IGM	NED	2672	1	½	0	½	0	0	½	*	1	0	½	1	5	2713
9	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2789	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	0	*	½	1	1	5	2703
10	Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR	2777	½	½	0	½	0	0	1	1	½	*	0	½	4½	2675
11	Richard Rapport	IGM	HUN	2691	½	½	0	0	0	0	1	½	0	1	*	0	3½	2614
12	Arkadij Naiditsch	IGM	GER	2718	0	0	0	½	1	½	0	0	0	½	1	*	3½	2612

By no means the most popular continuation, but a rather forceful one. Black wants to develop his pieces with every comfort, and to fight for an advantage White must play energetically.

9.♗g5

Since this is an unexplored position, only further practice will reveal the most accurate set-ups for both sides. At the board it seemed logical to me to fight for the d5-point.

9...♘bd7 10.♘d5 ♗b7 11.♘ec3 ♖c8

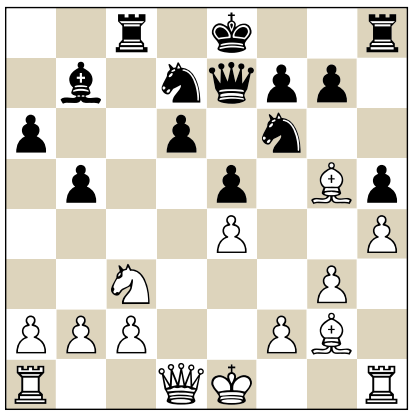


12.♗g2

After 12.h4, at the board I was afraid of 12...♕a5!?, with the idea of answering 13.b4 with 13...♘xd5!? 14.bxa5 ♘xc3 15.♕c1 ♗xe4 16.♖h2 d5, when the position seemed completely unclear. Black has two knights and a pawn against a queen, but the white pieces are disconnected, the rook at h2 is out of play, and I was afraid to go in for this.

12...♗e7 13.♘xe7 ♕xe7 14.h4

With the idea at some point of developing the bishop at h3.



14...♘b6

Fighting for the centre, and preparing the knight jump to c4.

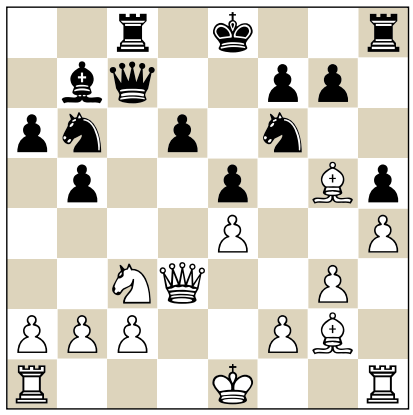
NEW IN CHESS

With a fine win over Boris Gelfand, Sergey Karjakin managed to stay within striking distance of leader Levon Aronian, who followed their opening moves with interest.

15.♕d3 Here it seemed logical to castle on the queenside, exploiting the vulnerability of the black d6-pawn.

15...♕c7

Perhaps it made sense for Black to complete his development by 15...0-0, and if 16.0-0-0, then 16...b4 17.♘d5 ♗xd5 18.exd5 ♖c5, with unclear play.



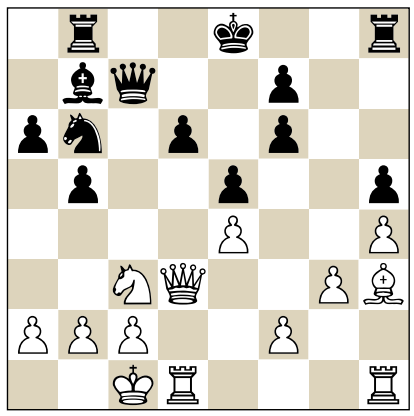
16.♗h3 Here 16.♗xf6 gxf6 17.0-0! deserved serious consideration. After breaking up the black pawns and hiding his king in a safe shelter, White can count on a small advantage. For example, if b5-b4 he can simply reply ♘d1, transferring the knight to e3.

16...♖b8

It made sense to move the knight that is under attack by 16...♘fd7! 17.0-0-0 b4 18.♘d5 ♗xd5 19.exd5, with complicated play.

17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.0-0-0

I was happy with the outcome of the opening. Boris was already beginning to run slightly short of time, and the black king will no longer be securely defended on either wing.



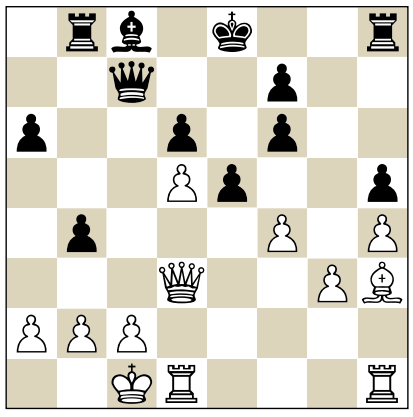
18...b4

18...♔e7 19.♔b1 would not have completely relieved Black of his problems.

19.♘d5 ♘xd5 The exchange of all the minor pieces by no means eases Black's problems with his king, but rather aggravates them.

He should have played 19...♗xd5 20.exd5 ♕c4. White has a pleasant choice between 21.♔b1!? ♕xd3 22.cxd3 ♘a4 (22...♘xd5 23.d4) 23.♗f5 and 21.♕xc4 ♘xc4 22.♖d3, in both cases with a small advantage.

20.exd5 ♗c8 21.f4



21...♗xh3?! Perhaps 21...a5 was the lesser evil, when Black retains chances of a successful defence.

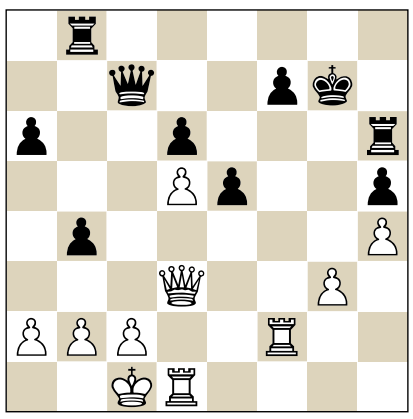
22.♖xh3

White is now obviously better, with quite easy play. His rooks can be switched to f1 and f2, when it is unclear what Black can do with his exposed king. In addition, Boris now had less than 20 minutes left on his clock and I was feeling quite optimistic.

22...♔f8

Perhaps not the best, but it is hard to suggest anything more sensible for Black. For example, if 22...♖c8 there is the unpleasant 23.♖h2 ♕c4 24.♕f5, with a big advantage.

23.fxe5 fxe5 24.♖h2 ♔g7 25.♖f2 ♖h6



26.♕xa6?!

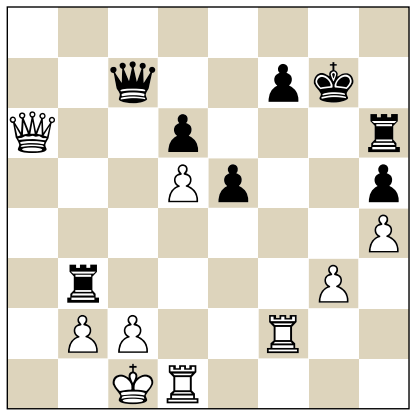
In Boris's time-trouble I was tempted by this pawn capture.

Meanwhile, I should have simply brought up my rook by 26.♖df1! with a big advantage.

26...b3!

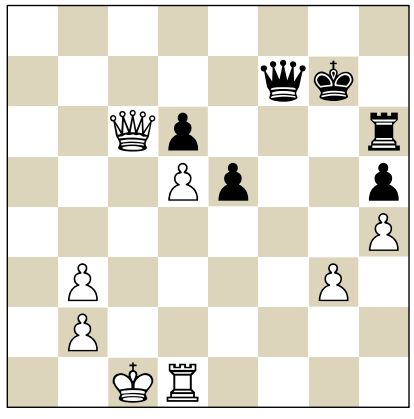
Boris finds the best chance!

27.axb3 ♖xb3



28.♕c6 An inaccuracy, but the position has already become sharper.

28...♕a7 29.♖xf7+ ♕xf7 30.cxb3



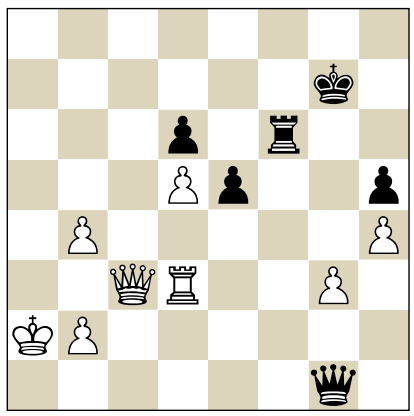
30...♖g6? An imperceptible mistake, after which White's advantage becomes threatening.

Meanwhile, after the correct 30...♖f6! 31.b4 ♕g6 White might have regretted his pawn-grabbing. Thanks to the activity of his pieces, Black equalizes.

31.b4 ♕f3

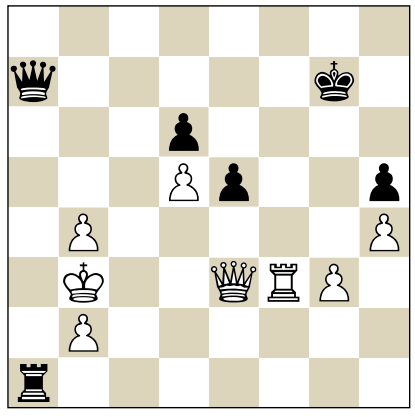
The last chance was 31...♕f2.

32.♕c3 ♕f2 33.♖d3 ♖f6 34.♔b1 ♕g1+ 35.♔a2 The white king hides comfortably at b3, and in general the rest is a matter of technique.



35...♕a7+ 36.♔b3 ♖f1 The last chance – Black wants to approach via the a-file. Fortunately for me, in time-trouble I was able to find a strong idea, forcing the exchange of queens.

37.♖f3 ♖a1 38.♕e3!

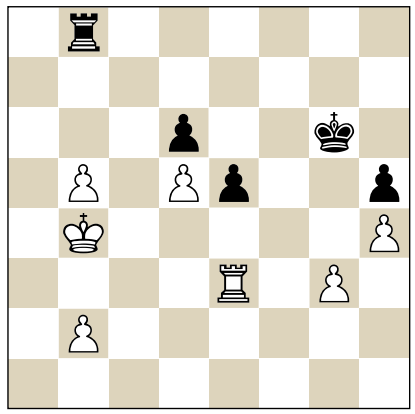


38...♕xe3+ If 38...♕a4+, 39.♔c3 and wins. Black does not have a single check, and White launches a decisive attack.

39.♖xe3

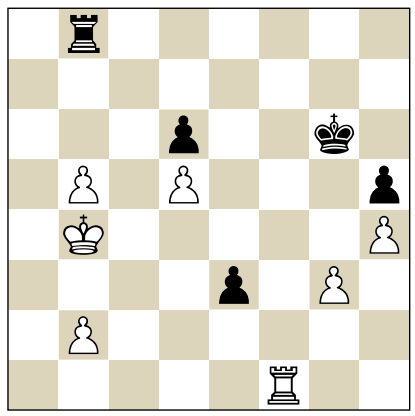
The resulting endgame is completely won for White. I missed something in the order of five forced wins, but at least I did not throw away overall victory!

39...♔g6 40.b5 ♖a8 41.♔b4 ♖b8



42.♖f3 Far simpler would have been 42.♔a5! ♔f5 43.b6 e4 44.♔a6 ♔e5 45.♔a7 ♖g8 46.b7 ♔xd5 47.b8♕ ♖xb8 48.♔xb8.

42...e4 43.♖f1 e3

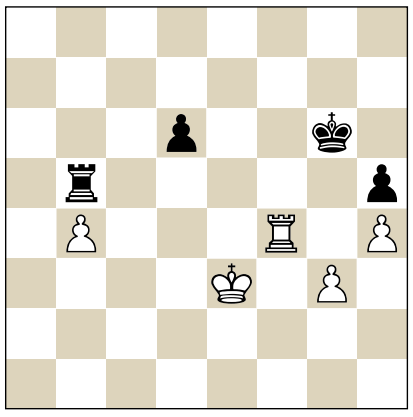


44.♔c4

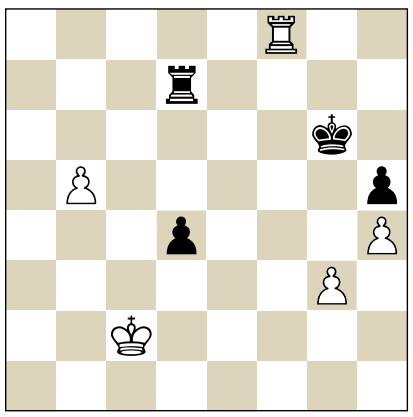
The simplest was 44.b3, with zugzwang, for example: 44...♖e8 45.b6 e2 46.♖e1 ♔f5 47.♔b5 ♔g4 48.b7 ♔f3 49.♔c6 ♔f2 50.♖xe2+ ♔xe2 51.♔xd6+−.

44...♖c8+ 45.♔d3 ♖c5 46.b4 ♖xd5+ 47.♔xe3 ♖xb5 48.♖f4

With my help Black has managed to regain a pawn, but even here White wins without particular difficulty, in view of the fact that the black king is cut off.



48...d5 49.♔d3 ♖b7 50.♔c2 ♖b8 51.♔c3 ♖b7 52.♖f8 ♖c7+ 53.♔b3 ♖d7 54.b5 d4 55.♔c2



55...d3+

The final subtlety consisted in 55...♖b7 56.♖g8+ ♔f5 57.♔d3! with an easy win.

56.♔d2 ♖d5 57.♖g8+ ♔h6 58.♖g5 ♖d4 59.♖c5 ♔g6 60.b6

Black resigned.

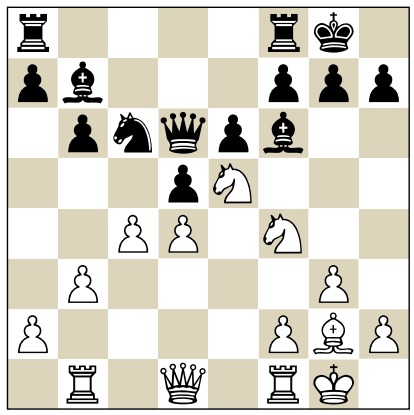
Despite the fact that in this tournament Boris was obviously not on his best form, any win over him affords great joy, and I am sure that on many future occasions he will again gladden his supporters with his brilliant play!

■ ■ ■

In this round Levon was paired with yours truly. I was a full point behind, so I saw no reason not to try and push for the full point. I succeeded in the pushing part, but the full point was not really within my reach. My opponent defended very precisely and I had to settle for a draw. In fact, the day wasn't as dull for me as my game. The famous Dutch singer songwriter Nick (from the duo Nick & Simon) visited the tournament. One could see the jealous eyes of the chess players: the public suddenly forgot about them and all eyes were focused on the Dutch star. In fact, some days later there was a similar, if not even more spectacular sight, when Garry Kasparov dropped by in Wijk aan Zee to give a press conference on his candidacy for the FIDE presidency and, of course, to sign books! Unlike Garry Kimovich, Nick has never been known as a great chess player. Yet you would be surprised to know how good he is. He could easily be the strongest celebrity chess player. In fact, I first met Nick a couple of years ago, when as the guest editor of the Dutch magazine 'Margriet' (a ladies magazine, quite different from New In Chess), Nick did interviews with his favourite sportsmen. Believe it or not, I turned out to be one of them. Since then we have kept in touch and he even invited me and my family to come and watch The Voice of Holland, a great singing-talent show, which I am forced to watch on TV every week, having two younger sisters (although I would probably be watching it myself anyway – it's really great).

In the evening I had a very pleasant dinner with Nick and his friends. We discussed his music career and his new opening repertoire. I must say I learnt some new tricks in the Scandinavian.

Back to the tournament. The intrigue died after the next round, played at the High Tech Campus in Eindhoven, when Aronian beat Karjakin in a smooth game, typical of Levon's style. Of course it has to be said that Karjakin helped him a bit.



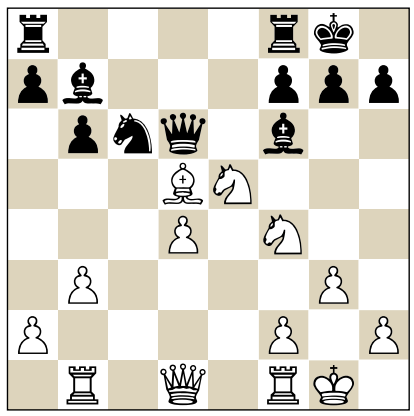
Aronian-Karjakin
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (9)
position after 19...♗xf6

Following a theoretical discussion in Karjakin's pet line in the Queen's Indian, this position was reached.

20.cxd5 exd5?!

Probably a mistake. According to Karjakin, 20...♘xd4 was his preparation. He probably started seeing ghosts over the board and decided to go for a safer line. Indeed, here White has plenty of options. Something for the theoreticians to work on. For instance, 21.♘g4!?, or 21.♘c6!?, or 21.♘c4!?.

21.♗xd5



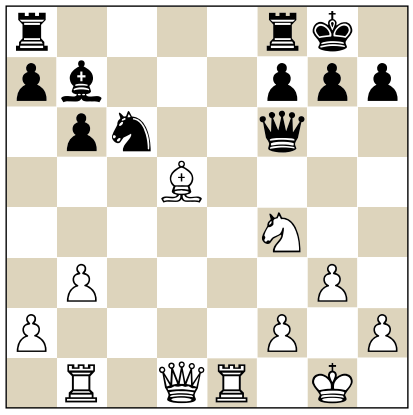
21...♗xe5 Too natural not to play it, but the alternative was objectively better, I believe.

21...♖ad8!? was suggested here, giving up a pawn with the idea of winning it back some moves later: 22.♗xc6 (22.♖e1 shouldn't be much, after 22...♘xe5 or 22...♘xd4!?, I believe in both cases White has merely a symbolic plus) 22...♗xc6 23.♘xc6 ♕xc6 24.d5 ♕b7 and now it's hard to prevent the ...♗g5 idea: 25.♕f3 ♗g5 26.♖fd1 ♗xf4 27.gxf4

♖d6 28.♖d4 ♖fd8 29.♖bd1, and this is a full pawn, although it will be hard (almost impossible?!) to convert it. On the other hand, I do believe there once was a similar game between these two players, in which Levon managed to convert a pawn like that.

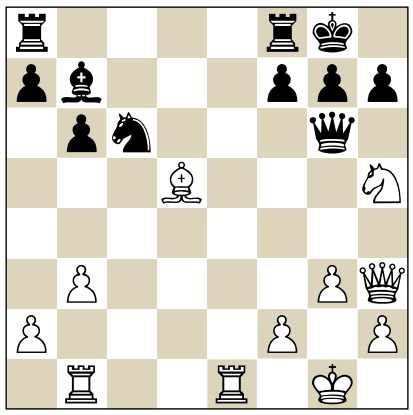
22.dxe5 ♕xe5 23.♖e1 ♕f6

The material is equal, but White has very nice pressure here.



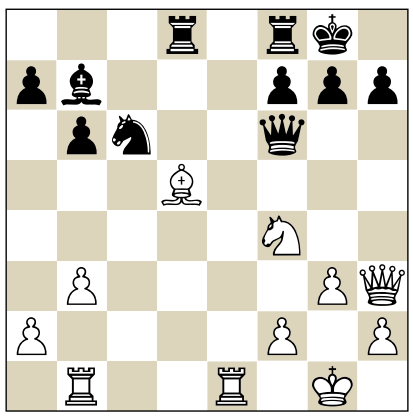
24.♘h5 Very clever, but I am not sure if it was needed.

24...♕h6 25.♕g4 ♕g6 26.♕h3



Exchanging queens also keeps the pressure, but this is quite unpleasant as well. While the queen seems strange on h3, now there are also ideas connected with ♕g2.

26...♖ad8 27.♘f4 ♕f6

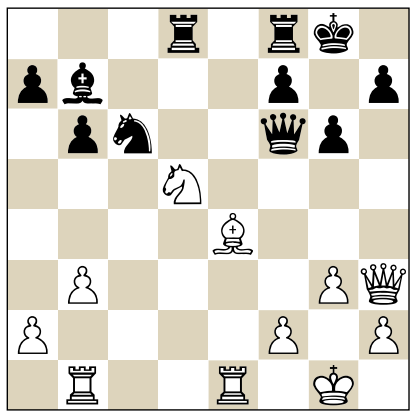


NEW IN CHESS

Anish Giri and singer songwriter Nick of 'Nick & Simon'. An avid chess player, the Dutch star showed our contributing editor some new tricks in the Scandinavian.

28.♗e4 Vacating the d5-square for the knight. 28.♕g2!? was also a way to play: 28...♗a8 29.♖bd1 g6 30.h4, and thanks to the centralized bishop on d5, White is a little more pleasant here.

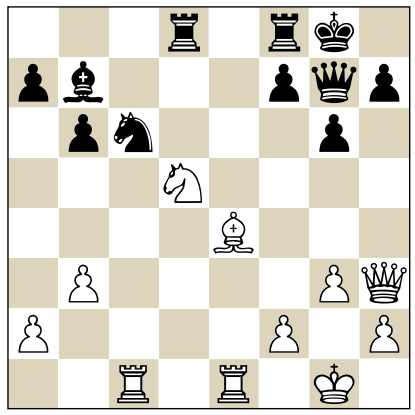
28...g6 29.♘d5 All this looks very tricky for Black, but the machine is cold. Levon is not precise, I hear.



29...♕g7

29...♕d6! was fine for Black, as the g7-square can be nicely used by the king. White's queen is a little misplaced to really help the d5-knight to create something: 30.♕h4 ♔g7!, and it's just equal. ...♖fe8 is coming and Black no longer has problems.

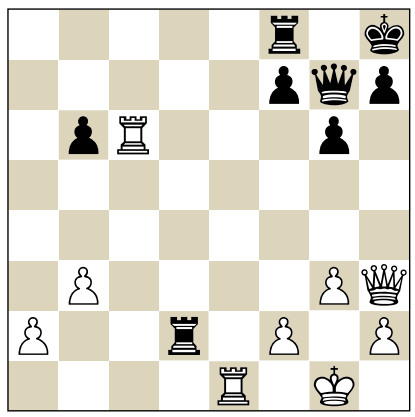
30.♖bc1 Preparing ♕h4. Now Sergey probably got too impressed. It happens to everybody when you have Levon opposite you. The guy is scary.



30...♔h8? 30...♖fe8 worked for Black. White has nothing: 31.♕h4 g5! 32.♕h5 ♘d4, and Black is doing excellent.

31.♘xb6 Now Levon gets what he wanted. A substantial plus.

31...axb6 32.♗xc6 ♗xc6 33.♖xc6 ♖d2



34.♕h4! The queen rejoins the game,

as the pawn on b6 will not run away.

34...♖xa2 35.♕b4 h5

It was wise to exchange the rooks at once with 35...♖a1!.

36.♕xb6

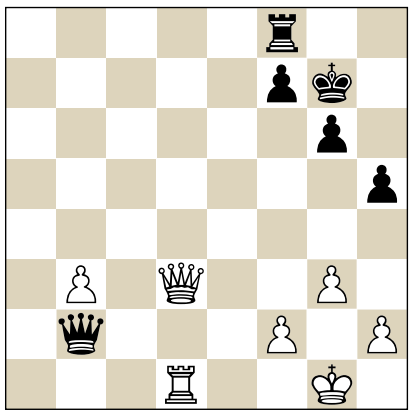
36.♔g2! would have been more unpleasant. The pawn is doomed anyway and now ...♖a1 no longer forces the exchange of one pair of rooks.

36...♖a1 37.♖cc1 ♖xc1 38.♖xc1 ♕b2

The endgame is very unpleasant for Black, but it's not without hope. The potential rook endings are known to be very drawish.

39.♖d1 ♔h7 40.♕b5 ♔g7 41.♕d3

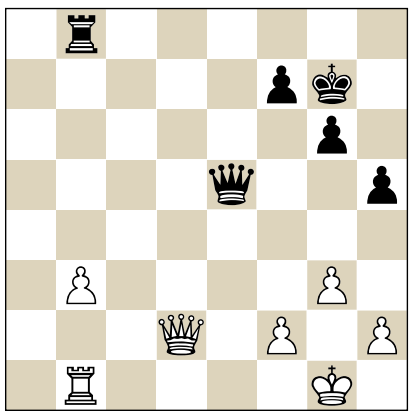
Levon is preparing the famous rook-behind-the-pawn mechanism.



41...♖b8?!

41...h4! was to be preferred, I believe. Now, after 42.♖b1 ♕f6 43.b4 (43.♕d2 ♖d8 44.♕b2 ♖d4) 43...♖d8, Black gets much more counterplay: 44.♕e2 h3!?, and the draw is within reach.

42.♖b1 ♕e5 43.♕d2!?



43...h4?

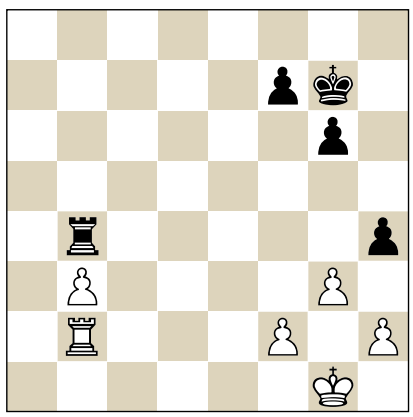
A very important decision. And the wrong one. Now Black allows a very dangerous-looking endgame. Something like 43...♕e4 was less committal and avoids the rook ending. The position is, of course, still very unpleasant.

> 'Now Sergey probably got too impressed. It happens to everybody when you have Levon opposite you. The guy is scary.'

44.♕b2! ♕xb2

44...♔f6?! brings the king one step closer, but allows 45.b4!.

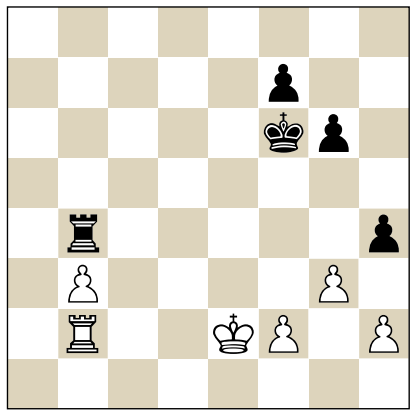
45.♖xb2 ♖b4



46.♔f1

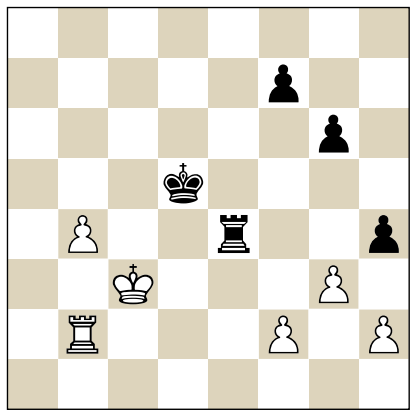
Now we get a very interesting endgame. As White I would be very happy and optimistic about my chances, although the pawn is blocked quite far away from the promotion square and the counterplay on the kingside is coming. Perhaps that's what Sergey was hoping for, but it seems that the endgame is in fact... as bad as it looks.

46...♔f6 47.♔e2



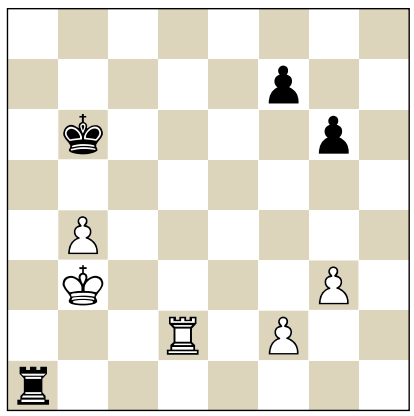
47...♔f5 Trying to create some counterplay, but it's too late.

47...♔e5, going to the queenside doesn't help either: 48.♔d3 ♔d5 49.♔c3 ♖e4 (49...♔c5 doesn't solve anything: 50.♖a2, and White should be able to convert) 50.b4, and now the following line is an example.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

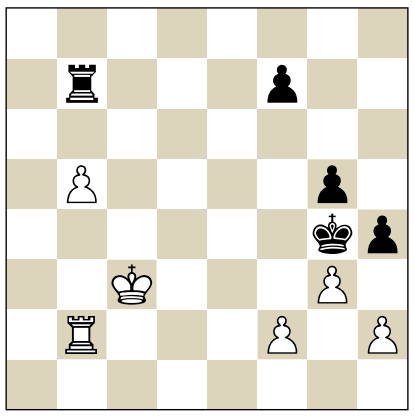
White slowly tears up Black's fortress and the king eventually penetrates the kingside. I believe I have seen something similar in some old books, about Alekhine and Capablanca: 50...hxg3 51.hxg3 ♔c6 52.♖a2 ♔b6 53.♖d2 ♔c6 54.♔b3 ♔b5 (54...♖e1 55.♔c4!) 55.♖d5+ ♔c6 56.♖c5+ ♔b6 57.♖c4 ♖e2 58.♖c2 ♖e4 59.♔a4 59...♖e1 (59...♖d4 60.♖e2) 60.♖d2 ♖a1+ 61.♔b3



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

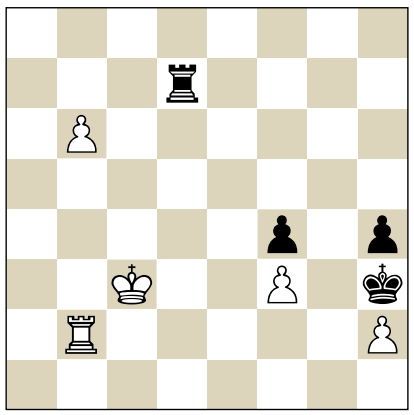
61...♖b1+ (otherwise ♖d7 was a threat. Black just can't control all the squares he needs to control) 62.♔c4 ♖c1+ 63.♔d5 ♖c6 64.♖d4 ♔b5 65.g4, and White should win pretty much automatically.

48.♔d3 g5 49.♔c3 ♖b7 50.b4 ♔g4 51.b5



51...♔h3

The following line is to demonstrate that Black's position is basically hopeless no matter what: 51...f5 52.b6 f4 53.gxh4 gxh4 54.♔d4 ♔h3 55.f3 (even this is winning) 55...♖d7+ 56.♔c3



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

56...♖d3+. The crazy rook has been achieved, but 57.♔c2 ♖c3+ 58.♔d2 ♖d3+ 59.♔e2 ♖e3+ 60.♔f2 ♖xf3+ 61.♔g1, and White wins.

52.gxh4 gxh4 53.f4

53.f3, as shown above, would win as well.

53...♔g4 54.b6 f5 55.♔d4 ♔xf4 56.♖b3 h3 57.♔d5 ♔g4 58.♔c6 ♖b8 59.♖g3+ ♔h4 60.b7 f4 61.♖g7

Black resigned. A typical Levon game. After such games I have a vision of an imaginary dialogue between Levon (L) and yet another unfortunate Levon opponent (U.L.O). U.L.O.: 'There I could have just played that move, it's equal! And after that, that move, it's also equal! And I could have made a draw there!' L. (With his trademark devilish smile): 'Yes, you could have.'

After that crucial game Levon won one more.

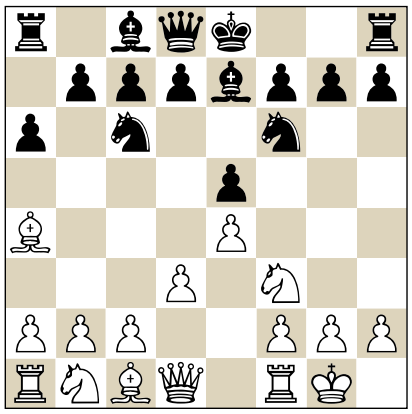
NOTES BY
Levon Aronian

RL 13.5 – C84
Leinier Dominguez
Levon Aronian
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (10)

1.e4

For five years, Leinier and I had not met in tournaments with a classical time-control. Studying his games, I noticed that in recent times he has been playing the fashionable variation 6.d3 in the Spanish.

1...e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.d3



6...b5

6...d6 is also an interesting move, but on this occasion I decided to follow an analysis by Gabriel Sargissian.

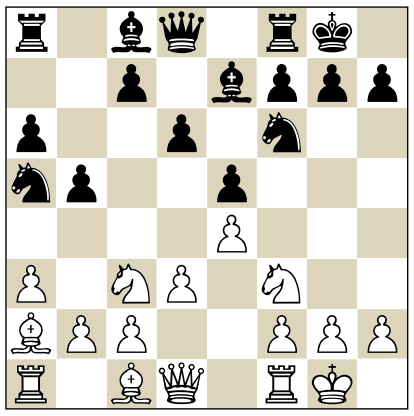
7.♗b3 0-0 8.♘c3

At the elite level, the plan with ♘c3 and a2-a3 was first played in 2013, by Anand against Adams. White's idea is quite simple: he wants to combine two ideas, transferring his knight to g3 or exchanging it on d5 and advancing d3-d4.

8...d6 9.a3

Since time immemorial it has been known that after 9.♘d5 ♘a5 the exchange of the b3-bishop leads to equality.

9...♘a5 10.♗a2

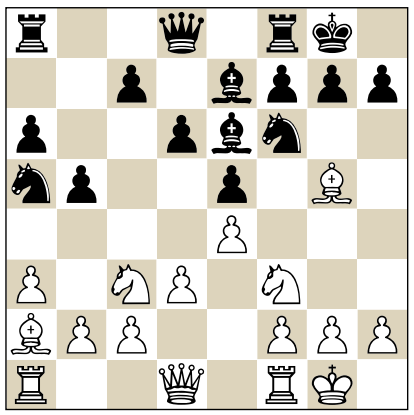


10...♗e6

This idea was first used by the talented player and theoretician Rustam Kasimdzhanov against Topalov in 2013.

11.♗g5

Since in any event Black's play involves the ...c7-c5 advance, White gets ready to fight for the light squares.



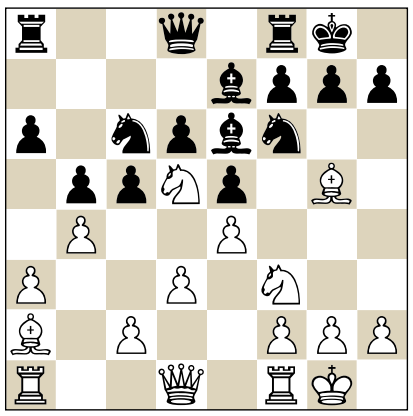
11...c5

Whoever is the first to play 11...♘c6 in this position should undergo a thorough search, desirably right down to the toes of his socks! This illogical move is considered the strongest by most computer programs...

12.b4 ♘c6 13.♘d5

At first sight White has made progress and is controlling the play, but it should be taken into account that the position of the pawn on b4 makes it impossible for White to carry out his main idea – the occupation of d5 and the opening of lines, followed by an invasion along them – since after

a3-a4 the b4-pawn will be hanging soon, and the exchange bxc5 dxc5 is advantageous to Black, since with the removal of the d6-pawn he no longer has any weaknesses.



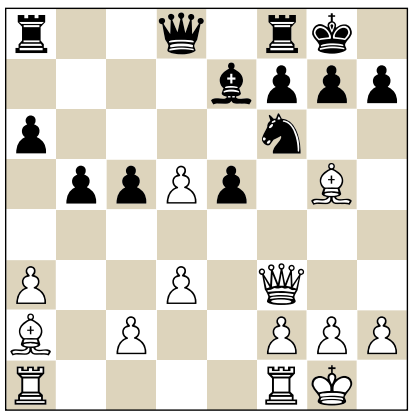
13...♗xd5

I found this idea 25 minutes before the start of the game, and I trusted it. After 13...♖c8 or 13...h6 Black's position is solid but slightly passive.

14.exd5 ♘d4 15.bxc5 ♘xf3+

During my home analysis the position after 15...dxc5 16.♘xe5 ♘xd5 17.♗d2 seemed unpleasant to me.

16.♕xf3 dxc5



This was the position for which I was aiming. If you look at it with human eyes, Black's play is natural, whereas what White should do is more difficult to understand. I thought that White's main move was 17.a4, after which I was intending to play 17...♕d6 followed by ...♗d8. From d8 the bishop can go to c7 or it can be exchanged by ...♘d7. The exchange of the dark-squared bishops leaves White with a weak bishop on a2 against Black's good knight.

17.♖fe1 This move looks natural, and I was expecting to see it.

'Levon was sometimes winning effortlessly and sometimes not, but he was just winning, game after game. What can I say? He is good.'

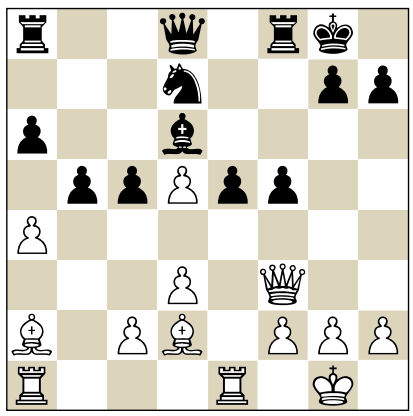
17...♘d7 With this move Black begins a regrouping.

18.♗d2 ♗d6 Preparing ...f7-f5.

19.a4

In my opinion, the strongest move is the prophylactic 19.♕f5. By forcing Black to play ...g7-g6, White safeguards himself against a possible attack involving the rook on f8.

19...f5

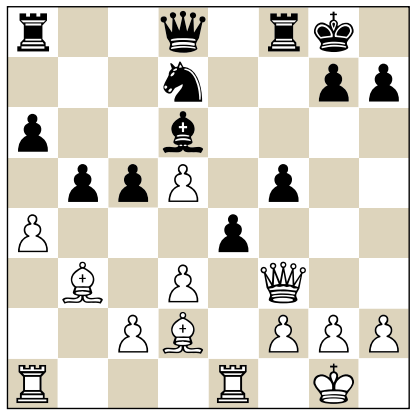


20.♗b3

A mistake, which hands Black the initiative. White should have gone 20.♕h3, after which the position would remain balanced, although, thanks to the attacking plan with ...♔h8, followed by ...f5-f4 and ...♖f6, purely visually Black's position seems the more promising.

20...e4

Of course! Now the bishop on b3 resembles a bird which has been released for a second, and then put back in its cage again.

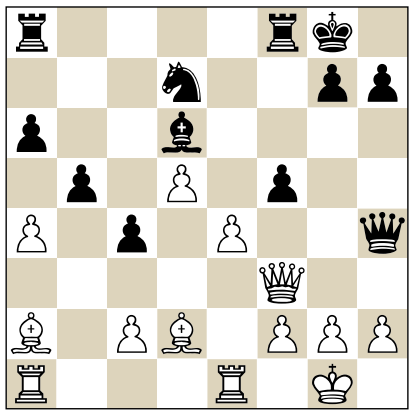


21.dxe4

Probably after noticing that against the planned 21.♕h3 Black has the good reply 21...♘e5, after which White probably has to go for the dangerous position after 22.dxe4 c4 23.♗a2 f4, Leinier chose another move.

21...c4 22.♗a2 ♕h4

After this move White's position is very unpleasant.



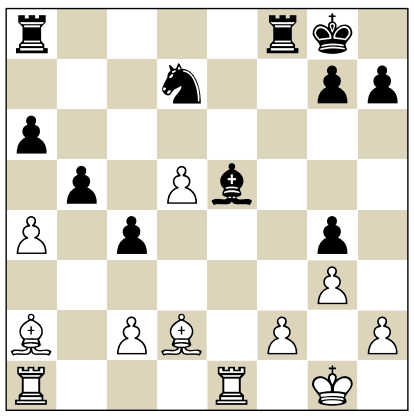
23.e5

The only move. After 23.g3 ♘e5 Black's attack can be repulsed only at very great cost, while 23.♕h3 is so ugly that after 23...♕xh3 24.gxh3 practically any move that is the slightest bit logical will lead to an advantage for Black.

23...♗xe5

In view of the fact that I was 1½ points ahead of my opponent, and that this was the penultimate round, I chose a safe continuation. After the strongest 23...♘xe5 24.♕g3 ♕f6 25.♗c3 f4 26.♕h3 ♖ae8 Black has a clear advantage.

24.g3 ♕g4 25.♕xg4 fxg4



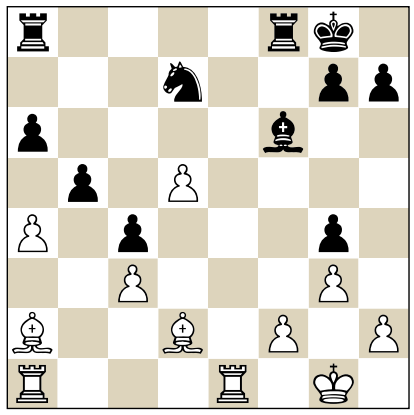
26.c3

In time-trouble Leinier makes a big mistake, probably having overlooked my reply. After 26.♖ad1 I thought that 26...♖f3 was very strong, but it would seem that after 27.♗b1 things are not so bad for White, and I might have had to settle for some slight pressure after 26...♖f6.

26...♗f6

By combining the threats of ...♘c5 and ...♘e5 Black gains a decisive advantage.

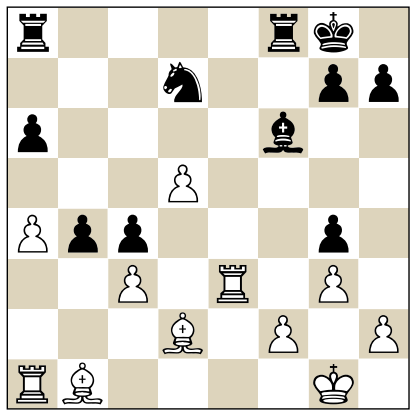
After 26...♖f3 things are not so simple, since after 27.♗b1 b4 28.d6 bxc3 29.♗e3 c2 30.♗xc2 ♗xa1 31.♖xa1 White has excellent drawing chances, despite the material deficit, thanks to the activity of his bishops.



27.♗b1 b4

27...♘e5 28.♗e4 ♘f3+ 29.♗xf3 gxf3 was also possible, when White has innumerable weaknesses. The plan I chose is no worse, but it is more complicated.

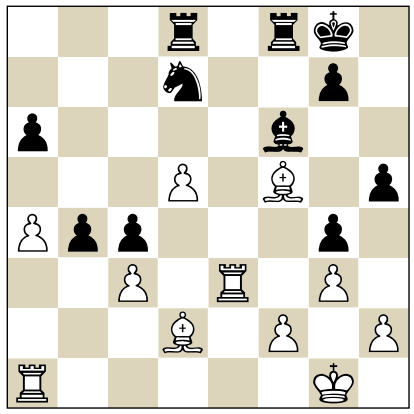
28.♖e3



28...♖ad8

The idea with ...♖ad8 and ...h7-h5 so appealed to me that I did not especially consider other, possibly stronger, ideas.

29.♗f5 h5



Multiple winners in Wijk aan Zee

Following his fourth victory at the Tata Steel tournament, Levon Aronian is only one win shy of Vishy Anand's record. With five wins the former World Champion tops the list of the most successful players in the history of Wijk aan Zee (first called Hoogovens, then Corus, now Tata Steel).

Vishy Anand, Mr. Wijk aan Zee since 1989.

5

Vishy Anand: 1989, 1998, 2003, 2004, 2006

Max Euwe, the most successful Dutch participant.

4

Max Euwe: 1940, 1942, 1952, 1958
Lajos Portisch: 1965, 1972, 1975, 1978
Viktor Kortchnoi: 1968, 1971, 1984, 1987
Levon Aronian: 2007, 2008, 2012, 2014

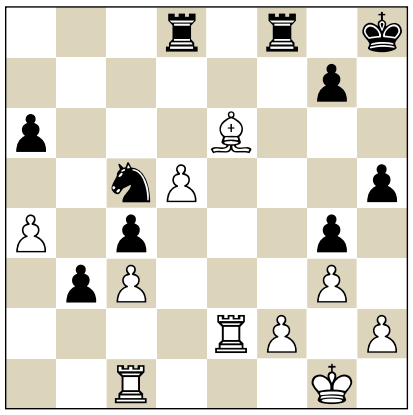
Garry Kasparov, first place guaranteed.

3

Hein Donner: 1950, 1958, 1963
Efim Geller: 1965, 1969, 1977
John Nunn: 1982, 1990, 1991
Garry Kasparov: 1999, 2000, 2001
Magnus Carlsen: 2008, 2010, 2013

Garry Kasparov holds the distinction of having won every Wijk aan Zee tournament he played in.

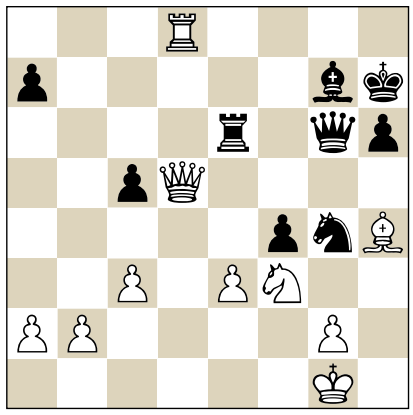
30.♖d1
The only way of prolonging the resistance was 30.♖b1 ♘c5 (30...b3 is not good, because of 31.♖e4) 31.cxb4 ♖xd5 32.bxc5 ♖xf5 33.♗c3, with a rook endgame where Black still has to play accurately in order to win.
30...b3
The d5- and a4-pawns will soon fall, so White's position is absolutely hopeless.
31.♗c1 ♗g5 32.♗e6+ ♔h8 33.♖e2
If 33.♖e4 the easiest way to win is 33...♘c5.
33...♗xc1 34.♖xc1 ♘c5
The rest is elementary: Black brings up his king and captures on e6.



35.a5 ♖fe8 36.♔f1 g6 37.♖ce1 ♔g7 38.d6 ♖xe6 39.♖xe6 ♘xe6 40.♖xe6 ♖d7 41.♖e8 ♖xd6 42.♔e2 ♖d3 White resigned.

■ ■ ■

As you can guess, the main fight was for second place and it was basically between me, who was just making draws (better or worse, boring or fighting, it always ended in a draw) and Karjakin, Caruana, Harikrishna and Dominguez, who were all experiencing ups and downs. In the penultimate round I drew with Karjakin, and since we both drew our last game as well, we ended up sharing second place. In fact, in the last round we were both in trouble (Sergey a little more than me), but then last-round games tend to be strange. To further support that thesis I would like to demonstrate to you a fragment of the game between the hero of the tournament (who won the event with a round to spare) and the hero of the last round.



Aronian-Van Wely
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (11)
position after 37... ♖e6

38.exf4?? The game had seen ups and downs in the time scramble and I believe, as Loek correctly pointed out, that blunders don't appear from nowhere. By now White has to take care and play for equality.
38.♕d3 is safe, but after 38...♘xe3 Black keeps some pressure in the endgame.
38.♘e1!? ♘xe3 39.♕f3 keeps the balance, according to the engine, but I would prefer Black. Or White. Well, it's a mess indeed.
38...♗d4+! A shocker! A check from b1 is going to follow and it is starting to resemble mate. 0-1.

The closing ceremony was somewhat different than usual. The traditional pea soup was still there, but instead of the usual tent, we spent the evening in a hotel on top of a dune hill. Not for the first time in the history of Wijk aan Zee, there was a striking contrast between the heat (both literally and metaphorically speaking) inside the hotel and the cold weather outside, where it was raining cats and dogs (one of those days that make you thankful to the inventor of the umbrella).

The winner of the tournament gave a very touching speech, which almost made me cry (now that I have almost stopped using smileys after a professor complained, it's hard to tell when I am sarcastic and when not. This time I am not!). Levon was grateful to the organizers and sponsors and showered compliments on the tournament and the land of the Dutch. Well, who would argue with that? ■

NEW IN CHESS

With a touching speech at the prize-giving, Levon Aronian declared his love for the Tata Steel Tournament. 'Wijk aan Zee is very special.'

Interview

‘Nothing that happens on the chess board can destroy my happiness’

With his sweeping victory in Wijk aan Zee and his inspired play in Zurich, Levon Aronian became the undisputed number two in the world rankings and the top favourite in the upcoming Candidates’ tournament in Khanty-Mansiysk. In a candid interview with **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam**, the Armenian star talks about his passions and priorities, Charles Aznavour, Magnus Carlsen, his happiness and his newly adopted hippie attitude (‘I’m relaxed and don’t care’). And, of course, the Candidates’: ‘Nobody can win this tournament without luck.’

NEW IN CHESS

Levon Aronian addresses Charles Aznavour, who visited the Zurich Chess Challenge in his capacity as Armenia's consul to Switzerland. 'I don't prepare any words. I talk straight from my heart.'

The smile that was there for two weeks has gone and he has withdrawn into himself. His face is expressionless as he silently leaves the stage of the Tata Steel Chess Tournament. A sudden loss in the last round is a scratch on an ultra-smooth performance. If, after 10 rounds, you have scored eight points and already secured first place, you don't expect to go under in a wild time-scramble against the bottom seed in your final game. Levon Aronian has spoiled a stellar performance and he knows it. As he walks into the press room, no one dares to speak to him. So, after an awkward minute or two, he starts to speak himself, trying to belittle what others see as a tragedy. Then suddenly his face lights up as he remembers what David Gross, an IM from the Czech Republic who sadly died at a young age, told him a long time ago: 'In order to play a perfect tournament, you have to sell one game and win the rest!' He laughs his infectious laugh again and continues by saying that Gross spoke his inspirational words in 1995, when Gross was 20 and Aronian was still a kid, barely 14. His laugh rises in pitch as he adds: 'That was more or less the Soviet approach!'

After his win in Wijk aan Zee, Levon Aronian spent only one day at home in Berlin before he travelled on to

Zurich, together with his girlfriend Arianne Caoili and his parents. He says he loves to play tournaments back to back and supports his words by continuing to play the same inspired chess. This time he doesn't win, but he does well in the games that are most closely watched, the ones against World Champion Magnus Carlsen. They are the numbers one and two in the world, after all. Aronian gets a completely winning position in the blitz, stands better in the classical game and after these two draws he wins a fine game in the rapid.

His mood hasn't suffered either. Friendly and forthcoming, he basks in the attention of the Swiss fans and is witty and lively at the press conferences. When, after one of the rounds, I am watching him talk with an admirer in the area outside the playing room on the first floor of the Savoy Hotel, I see that his mother is doing the same. With a radiant look of approval she tells me: 'Always laughing, always smiling.' I ask if he has always been like this and she replies with a nod that seems to contain a hundred happy memories.

After the Zurich Chess Challenge Levon Aronian took his time to look back on his promising start of the year and the challenges ahead. He agrees that he was in high spirits in Wijk aan Zee and Zurich, and gives a basic reason as a first explanation.

'I just really missed playing chess. Despite all the bad results, 2013 was actually a very good year for me. I had many more good results than bad results. I did pretty well in the last two tournaments, the European and World Team Championships, and I was anxious to see if I could maintain this level. Having been in business for a long time I know that good results are not permanent. I wanted to see if I could stretch what people call form and what I call... I don't know what I call it. To continue playing chess that has more quality than usual. Chess is so emotional and psychological that you can't really have good form. If an athlete is running really well, you cannot take that away from him. Even if something terrible happens in his life, still he is going to run well. With a chess player, if for five minutes something goes wrong emotionally, he's gone. A chess player is much more vulnerable. If you find out that a relative of yours is in trouble, or one of your friends, that affects a chess player much more than a runner. Maybe that is not entirely true, but that's the way I generally think. That's why you cannot say there is something like form. It's the emotional state that a chess player is in. If you look at a chess player's career and you know what was happening in his life, even on the surface, you can always trace back his good results to his good mood and things going right in his life.'

'I had a personal crisis two years ago. I suddenly realized that, although I loved the game of chess, I was not that excited about it anymore.'

Things were not going well for you in St. Louis. You said to me that after the Sinquefield Cup you told yourself that enough was enough, that it was time to play good chess again.

'One reason why I played so badly in my first tournament in the United States was that I was so excited. I really wanted to give my best. Sometimes I can explain my really bad results because I really want to play well. I get fixated on the result instead of getting fixated on the level of play. That definitely doesn't work for me. We are living in a society that is fixated on numbers, rankings, things like this. It's difficult to forget this, even though that's what we should be trying to do. Sometimes you think, oh, I don't want to lose this rating, I want to gain more. As soon as you allow yourself to forget it, that's when you start playing well.'

Is this what you're trying, to look for intrinsic values rather than rankings or hypes?

'I generally try to do so. It's not so easy. Anything you do, take music, take art, any interest you have, you are still going to go for the person who is most famous, who is number one. And it takes some time to realize that there is a whole world of artists that nobody knows about. And they're great artists. And that is one of these things that are very humbling for a chess player. If you want to meet up with somebody you always want to meet up with the best. But then you meet up with somebody who is not the best and you realize what a wonderful and incredible artist that person is. In chess we don't have that so much, it's much more linked to your ratings.'

After the Sinquefield Cup you won the Grand Slam Masters in Bilbao and did very well at the European and World Team Championships. How did you do that?

'I just relaxed and that allowed me to play well. I had a personal crisis two years ago. It was during the Tal Memorial, where I suddenly realized that, although I loved the game of chess, I was not that excited about it anymore. It was difficult for me to play chess. Somehow I started worrying about my position in the world rankings and this completely took away the passion and love for the game. It took me about a year to start coming back to my old self. It's all about what you enjoy doing. I didn't really care much about results. With a slightly better result I will be slightly more able to maintain my expensive lifestyle, but in general I am not going to drop below a certain level.'

Does that mean that the last round losses in Wijk aan Zee and Zurich are signs that you still cannot convince yourself enough that you should not care about the result?
'Actually not. Those games are completely different. The game against Van Wely, it's one of these things that happen. The whole tournament I wasn't in time-trouble and now I was, so I lost my cool. My explanation for the game against Caruana is that I got too relaxed, I lost my sense of danger. But I wasn't stressed about the result. In Wijk aan Zee, of course, this played a role, because I wanted to win and have one of the best results, but in Zurich absolutely not. There still was the rapid. Nothing had been decided yet.'

In Wijk aan Zee you arrived after a holiday in Cambodia. Your Christmas holidays in exotic places have almost become a ritual.
'Visiting a special country like Cambodia feels good throughout the year. I keep thinking back to those trips. You're excited, you tell people that there is a country like this. Will it be Cambodia, or will it be Malaysia, or Vietnam or the Philippines. Every person who deals with some sort of art, which I think chess is, needs inspiration. So that's what it is.'

You go there and pick up energy that you carry with you for the rest of the year.
'Yes, and to make my colleagues and everybody else jealous (laughs).'

The word that kept coming to mind in Wijk aan Zee when watching your games was 'fresh'. You were greedy, hungry to play.
'Yes, I had been training a lot, because I was missing chess and I really wanted to find new ideas. This I managed before different games. During play I was trying not to be stressed, just to enjoy it. I didn't care about the result so much. In some games I committed terrible inaccuracies, which were more or less connected with my emotional and intuitive way of playing. Even if I was not playing the most correct moves, they came from my feeling. Emotionally charged moves. Which of course is not very good, but it represents the way I was feeling about Wijk aan Zee. I was there just to enjoy and to trust myself and to get this joy in chess, loving what you do.

'Sometimes not caring, playing inaccurate moves but just being sure that things will work out, is also a way to go. Against Nakamura I wasn't really playing my best in the endgame, but my feeling told me that I was going to win that game. Or the game against Wesley (So), where I felt that things were going to work out and they did in the end. Grischuk calls it Svidler's type of technique. He plays really fast and with joy and things normally work out (laughs).'

You stuck to an iron regime in Wijk aan Zee. Going for a run on the beach every morning, having a healthy breakfast. Who designed this regimen?
'I am not a very sporty guy, as you know. So when it comes to eating habits and sport habits, it's either a friend of mine who is our team's doctor, or Arianne, who is a sports enthusiast.'

Are there things you should or shouldn't eat?
'No, not really. Some things, like before or during the game not to eat this or that, but nothing really deep.'

Not like Magnus, who is extremely cautious about his sugar intake.
'No, because I am more of a free nature, I think. I like to have a chocolate or two sometimes, even during the game. Somehow you cannot stick to a healthy regime every day if you are Armenian (laughs). Usually in Armenian houses you will have candy here and candy there, fruit here or fruit there. Trying to get away from sugar is a challenge.'

There's always stories about your team. That all of Armenia is behind you. How

Facts & Figures

Levon Aronian was born in Yerevan on October 6, 1982. He first caught attention internationally when he became U-12 World Champion in 1994. In 2002 he won the U-20 Junior World Championship.

Aronian joined the chess elite with his win at the 2005 World Cup. His major tournament victories include Wijk aan Zee (4 times), the Moscow Tal Memorial (3 times), Linares (2006), the 2011

Levon Aronian lifts the Hamilton Russell Cup at the 2008 Olympiad in Dresden.

FIDE Grand Prix and the Alekhine Memorial in Paris and St. Petersburg in 2013. He has been in the top 3 of the world rankings since 2010.

Aronian led the Armenian teams that won the gold medals at the 2006, 2008 and 2012 Olympiads and the 2011 World Team Championship. Last year he won the individual bronze medal at the European Team Championships and had the best result on Board 1 at the World Teams with a 2896 performance.

So far the Armenian hasn't been very successful in the World Championship cycle. In 2004 he progressed to the third round of the FIDE knock-out championship. He scored 6 out of 14 in the 2007 World Championship in Mexico and 8 out of 14 in the 2013 London Candidates'. He is the top-seed at the Candidates' tournament in Khanty-Mansiysk from March 11 to April 1.

big is your team? How many people do you work with on a regular basis?
'Actually I have one helper. Who I regularly ask to do this or that. When I understand that he is going to do this work much better than I do, which happens quite a lot. There are many people, but I don't engage them simultaneously. Maybe five people in all.'

Loyal Armenians.
'Yes. But I didn't really design them to be Armenians, I didn't really design them to be loyal (laughs). They are my friends. People I grew up with, people I became a good player with. All these guys who came with me to tournaments. Sargissian, Movsesian, Pashikian...'

Do you still have access to the super computer in Yerevan?
'It's not really a super computer. If I am going to tell people its strength they are going to laugh at me. So I am not going to tell to let them think that I have a super computer. But I do work with a stronger machine than a regular laptop, I have to admit.'

> 'I really love playing in places where people come to watch the games and there is a lot of media exposure.'

This support is a great thing, but it can also be a burden, because of all the expectations. How do you deal with that?
'Yeah, uh, well, now I just relax. Lately I have adopted this new attitude. I've been trying and trying and worrying, but now is the time to enjoy. I mean, of course, being in the cycle and trying to be the challenger is a great privilege, but if it doesn't happen I just have to concentrate on tournaments.

'Generally you are always trying to understand what makes you play well and what it is that makes you play badly. There are things that sometimes you just can't understand. How come you made this mistake? Mostly it bugs you that people try to find an explanation for it, while you know there is no explanation. The explanation is mostly very far from anything rational. And yet, people near you always try to find something rational. You can look at my game against Van Wely and try to understand. Oh, it was a Dutch Defence, and Black had a black bishop, and this also happened three years ago when Levon lost a Dutch game with a dark-squared bishop giving him a check. Yes, you can connect all these things if you want to. But mostly a game

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depends on one little blunder when you're losing your cool.'

At the prize-giving you said touching words about the significance of the Wijk aan Zee tournament. Why is it special to you?
'Well, you know, most of the tournaments that have been great in time, have disappeared. Wijk aan Zee is very special. With its atmosphere of amateurs playing next to the professionals. Having a really friendly and relaxed atmosphere in a small town that is dedicated to chess. Where I know that if I come back next year, things are going to be the same. For some people this is depressing, for me it's a sign that chess is still living, that chess is still there.'

From Wijk aan Zee you went to Zurich, which was billed as the strongest tournament in history. Still, I guess that for you it was another warm-up for the Candidates'.
'For me it was a brilliant tournament with the best players in the world playing. To be invited there was very special to me. Since the match against Kramnik there two years ago I know what a beautiful venue it is and what a wonderful organization. I really love playing in places where people come to watch the games and there is a lot of media exposure. One of the things that I felt when I came to Zurich this time, is that I very much wanted to play. Now that I more or less have this hippie attitude, like I am relaxed and I don't care (laughs).'

This is the impression that you often give. That you're almost carefree, which of course cannot be the case. Is that an image you create for yourself?
'No, no, I'm actually truly carefree. I mean, as I told you, sometime during my career I had these moments when I started worrying too much, but now I sleep wonderfully. I don't see any chess in my sleep during tournaments. When I blundered something I used to have sleepless nights.

Having fun in the Zurich press room. 'Magnus is adventurous and it's something I live for to play games with players who can surprise me.'

Which, by the way, I think helps you on your way up, to take things personally. You know, it's just all these periods in your life. It's like with musicians, say like saxophone players in the past. They really had to work on their mouthpiece, and it would break and for a couple of albums they would be insecure before they had built their mouthpiece again. There's this story about Coltrane. He really wanted to improve his mouthpiece, for comfort. So he would alter it, alter it, bend it somewhere, do all these little things. And then he broke it. The one with which he had recorded some free and adventurous albums. He had two albums to record and he was really stressed and had to play very relaxed. Before he could build it up again, the way he wanted it for his long solos. This is what a chess player himself creates. New routines, new ideas, new behaviour, psychological things, just to make things sound or work the way he wants it. Some start having a nap before the game, some start eating certain things. Kasparov and other people who are superstitious, they always have their new things. And I have them, too, as much as any musician or chess player. And they change. Now I have this attitude, I am a hippie, but if things work badly, of course I am going to look for something new.'

Was the tournament in Zurich a warm-up for a renewed rivalry with Magnus Carlsen?
'I don't have a rivalry with anybody. It's nice to play against Magnus because he's a very strong chess player. Especially in normal games, in blitz or rapid it's different. In a normal game I am a slow player and I think he's more or less a slow player. You can really get into a person's head and know what he is thinking about. That's why playing different players is lots of fun. Especially with players who constantly can bring you surprises and can constantly challenge you.'

Is it good to have someone around who is better in some parts, someone you can fight against?
'It's a wonderful feeling. It's a feeling that you don't get every day. It's hard to explain, but it's something to look forward to. Perhaps if you love the game of chess that way people may find it masochistic, but I see it more philosophically. Just to give an example, I don't think I learned so much in chess from anybody as much as I have learned from Ivanchuk. By playing games against him. I kept on losing to

him, I kept doubting myself, kept trying to understand what he thinks. It's such a wonderful feeling. It's a feeling that makes me play chess, makes me excited.

'Magnus is adventurous and it's something I live for to play games with players who can surprise me. There are a handful of players, OK, maybe two handfuls, who can come up with something that really surprises me. Certainly Magnus is one of them. This is both emotionally and aesthetically pleasant. Also the other way round, that's something I really like to do. That you can actually teach somebody with your moves, which occasionally happens. You play someone and you come up with a brilliant idea. You play it and you can feel that your opponent understands that you came up with something really interesting. That's the most wonderful feeling in the world. To impress and be impressed. Challenging each other mentally.'

You also seem to enjoy some psychological fooling around. It was fun to see how you took the initiative before the start of the first press conference, telling Magnus that your basketball skills have dramatically improved lately. He clearly enjoys that, but maybe he's also puzzled with what you're getting at.

'Oh, that's nonsense. I am never getting at anything. I am just talking to a colleague about something that we both enjoy. After all, we are not killing each other. We are doing something we both enjoy, chess, and we get along fine, like most of the players. And we love to play basketball, football, anything against each other. And we are sharing things, because we haven't seen each other for a long time. Outside competition I certainly miss my opponents. I mean, if I am on good terms with them, which I am with most of the players. Our rivalry is wonderful. And doesn't conflict with friendship. My friend Gelfand and I, we really want to impress each other when we play.'

Still your games in Zurich were a clear improvement on your dramatic loss against Magnus in St. Louis. That game must have hurt a lot.

'Uh, you don't get hurt from a game you really played badly. You get hurt when your opponent outplays you. If you lose because you were such an idiot, you just take it as inevitable. It's going to happen once every tournament or every two tournaments, that you have a ridiculous game. In the United States I had a couple. The one against Nakamura was really bad, where I just lost in one move. And both games against Magnus were just disgusting.'

'You don't get hurt from a game you really played badly. You get hurt when your opponent outplays you.'

Then you just tell yourself, that was not me as I should be and that's it?

'Yes. Well, you understand the root of the problem and you try not to do it again.'

As at any tournament anywhere, various Armenians came to support you. Obviously the biggest moment was the visit of Charles Aznavour. How much time did you spend on the warm words you said to him?

'I don't prepare any words. I talk straight from my heart. A friend of mine, Gabriel Sargissian, told me once that the toasts that I make are very simple, but very beautiful. That's the way I feel about Mr Aznavour and everything he has done for music and for us as a nation. He is a great artist, who has dedicated his life to creation. At the same time, he is Armenian and he is proud of it. He is not like a person who goes, I'm Armenian, no, he is a person of many cultures. Predominantly, of course, he is French, culturally. But the fact that he cares and the fact that he always helps his country, and the fact that he came and supported me, that for me is incredible. That a person of such stature and talent with such a busy life spends his time doing that.'

You love his music. Which are your favourites?

'Oh, I absolutely love his early albums. His albums before the 60s and from the 60s. He's been creating lots of music, lots of different melodies, a very romantic kind of music. I, of course, have all of his albums, but those are the ones I enjoy the most. There's much less studio, they are much more emotional, raw emotions.'

You don't want to put too much pressure on yourself for the Candidates' tournament. What plan do you have? Is it possible to approach this tournament like any other tournament?

'Nobody can win this tournament without luck. Generally, such tournaments are very difficult and you never can tell who is going to win. I am just going to enjoy it. I know I am one of the players that can do it. I look forward to playing and who knows? I mean, if I don't win it, I am not going to be upset. That's for sure.'

That's what you're telling yourself.

'That's what I know. It's just the way it is. Such tournaments are just too strong and the players are super-prepared, so everybody is going to use his chance.'

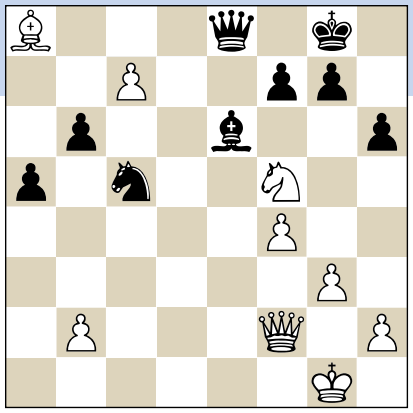
Can you say this, almost laconically, because apart from your chess you're a happy person?

'Yes, I'm a happy person and I feel that nothing that happens in chess can really destroy my happiness. Nothing that happens on the chessboard. Because I have a passion for the game and if you have a passion and you enjoy it, even your bad results can be enjoyable.' ■

Yochanan Afek

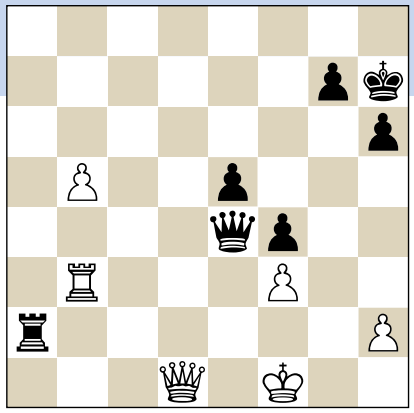
Beware: Brilliancy!

Solutions of page 45



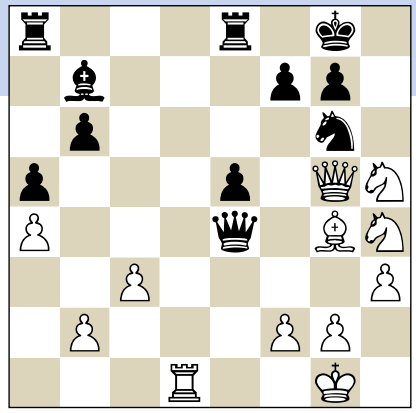
Zhao Xue-Timman
Wijk aan Zee Challengers 2014

The right way was 35.♗c6! ♕f8 (35...♕xc6?? 36.♘e7+), when after for example 36.♘d4 ♕d6 chances are level.



Karjakin-Dominguez
Wijk aan Zee Masters 2014

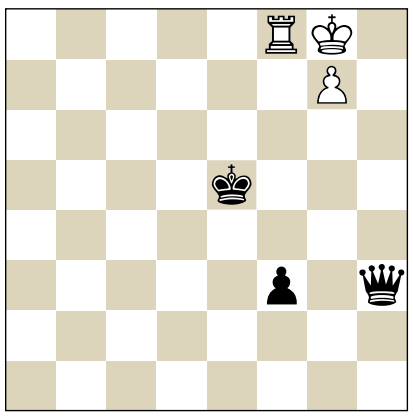
The aesthetic geometric retreat 44...♕a8! would not have left White many survival chances. After e.g. 45.♕d3+ ♔h8 46.b6 ♖xh2 47.♔g1 (47.b7?? ♕a1+ 48.♖b1 ♕xb1+) 47...♖h3 48.b7 ♕a7+ it's all over.



Jobava-Bok
Wijk aan Zee Challengers 2014

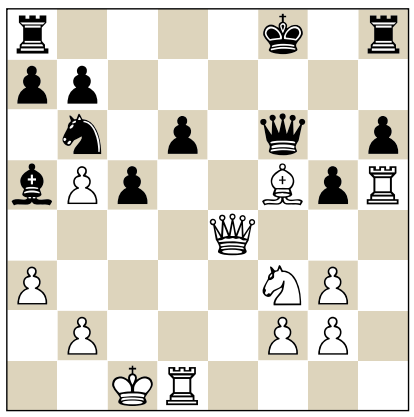
25.♘xg7! ♔xg7 26.♘f5+ ♔g8 27.♗f3 ♕f4 28.♕f6 was a killer.

Readers are invited to send in brilliant missed opportunities by titled players to: afekchess@gmail.com



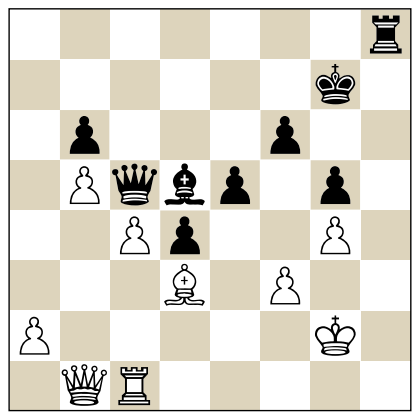
Bok-Timman
Wijk aan Zee Challengers 2014

The 'trick' is to reach the diagrammed position with Black to play! Simple triangulation does the trick: 81...♕g4 82.♔h7 ♕h5+ 83.♔g8 ♕h3! and White is in a complete zugzwang, e.g: 84.♖f7 (84.♔f7?? ♕e6 mate) 84...♕e6 85.♔f8 ♕c8+ 86.♔e7 ♕g8 87.♖xf3 ♕xg7+ etc.



Goudriaan-Zhao Xue
Wijk aan Zee Challengers 2014

With the astounding 21.♘xg5!! White could have won brilliantly: 21...hxg5 22.♖xd6! ♕g7 (22...♕xd6 23.♖xh8+ ♔g7 24.♕xb7+, winning) 23.♖xh8+ ♕xh8 24.♗g4! ♕g7 25.♕f5+ ♔e7 26.♖g6 ♕f7 27.♖e6+ ♔f8 28.♖f6, and wins.



Nakamura-Gelfand
Wijk aan Zee Masters 2014

43...♗xf3+!! 44.♔xf3 e4+! 45.♗xe4 ♕a3+!. This 'invisible move' attacks the kingside from the other side of the board! 46.♔g2 ♕h3+ 47.♔f2 (47.♔g1 ♕e3+ 48.♔g2 ♕e2+ 49.♔g1 ♖h4!−+) 47...♕e3+ 48.♔f1 ♖h4! and wins. A tough nut to crack!

Susan Polgar Chess Daily News

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Chess is a team sport!

Spot your worst placed piece. It may be waiting to join the action.

No, I am not talking about the guy to your right, eating an apple like a firecracker or the guy to the left slurping coffee as if it is his intention to disturb not only his opponent, but everyone else in the playing room. I am talking about the noble warriors standing up for us, the small wooden figures forming our personal small army.

I think it was Botvinnik who considered chess a communist game, because it is best played when all the pieces are working together for a common goal. I think this is a prudent metaphor, especially if you take the thought to its logical conclusion, which is that there is only one piece that is not expendable and that great masses will be carelessly sacrificed for the dictator's greed and ambition.

For those with less morbid tastes it might make sense to think of chess as a team sport in which the chess player is the team manager, trying to make the most out of all of his pieces. Because if we strip away our personalities and ideologies, this is exactly where we will end up.

NEW IN CHESS

Jacob Aagaard

I don't know what your childhood was like, but mine involved a lot of physical sports and a lot of sitting on the bench. I have only one memory of support and encouragement from a football trainer. I was 12 and he was only 17, but he was already on his way to a professional career and I was not very promising compared to the other kids. But in a short period of time I improved quite a lot, at which point he left and I discovered tennis...

Like most amateur football coaches, chess players have a tendency to look at what they can get out of their best placed pieces, to do more with those pieces that are already doing something. It is the same kind of psychology that will make a toddler steal a toy from another child, because once it is playing, it seems alive. And just like the beginner that attacks with just one piece, about 99.999% of all chess

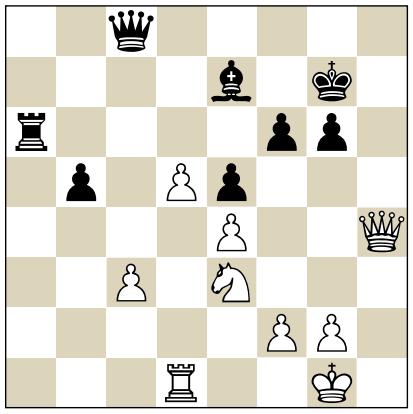
Grandmaster Jacob Aagaard is the founder of Quality Chess and the creator of the Excelling, Grandmaster Preparation and Grandmaster Repertoire series. His next book, Endgame Play, will be published in April/May.

players in the world either struggle to make the most out of their least effective pieces – or completely neglect them.

We have all experienced playing against beginners that come at us one piece at a time. But surely this is a tendency that is quickly suppressed by our pattern recognition and intuition? No, not in my experience! Once, reading a chapter in the brilliant *Attack & Defence* by two of the greatest chess trainers of all time, Mark Dvoretsky and Artur Yusupov, I had the same feeling. The chapter was called 'Missed Brilliancies' and was written by Artur. I played through the games and got the feeling that in more or less all the games, the reason for the attack failing was not so much the complicated variations Artur gave in the book, the blunders and so on. It was **the failure to include the final piece in the attack**.

Take the following example:

Adam Horvath
Zoltan Almasi
Bastia (rapid) 2013



White to play – which is the best way to exploit the advantage?

Obviously White has an extra pawn and a large advantage almost no matter what he does. But just like a boxer in the ropes, Black is not dreaming of equalizing at this moment, but simple hoping that he can prolong the fight long enough to get a chance to do something. And then maybe, just maybe, he will have a chance to save the game.

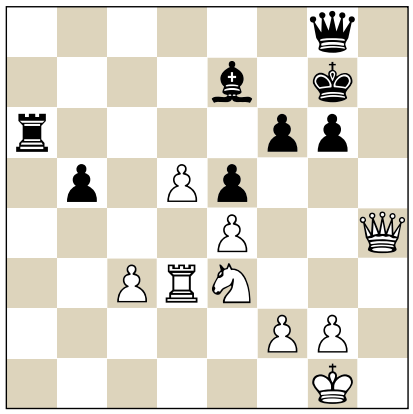
As this is a rapid game, it is not fair to criticize the players for not seeing deeply enough, but it does give us a chance to verify whether chess is all about pattern recognition. In the game, Horvath randomly shuffled his pieces around for a bit, without doing great damage to his positional advantage, but also without improving his chances. After 47.♕g3 ♔f7 48.♕h4 ♔g7 49.♘g4 ♕h8 50.♕g3 ♕h5 51.♘e3 White retained a large technical advantage (and an extra pawn!), but Black had managed to keep the game going. A draw was eventually reached on move 126.

If White instead had sensed that the black king was exposed and that his own rook was not doing much (or had time to sense it, to be fair to the players!), he might have played

47.♖d3! planning to swing the rook to g3. Black has to play:

47...♕g8

To defend the g6-pawn and to defend the soon to be fleeing king.



White to play – What next?

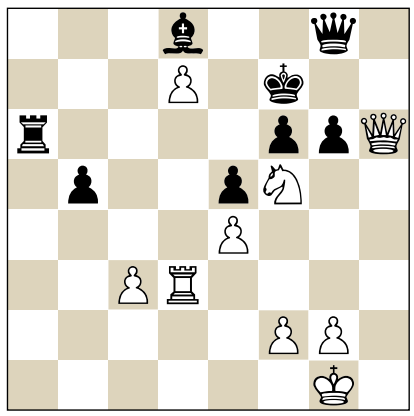
White can at this point improve his position considerably with 48.♘f5+ ♔f8 49.♖g3, which is probably how we would be happy to play in a rapid game. White gets all his pieces into the attack without taking any real chances.

But he has a far more brutal way to continue, which involves making something out of the d-pawn as well:

48.d6 ♗d8

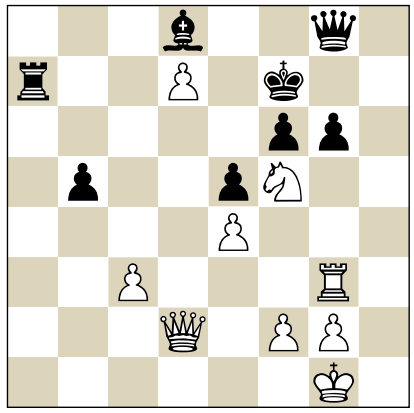
You need to be a machine to think that 48...♖xd6 49.♘f5+, where White wins the queen with a technically winning position, is a better try.

49.♘f5+! ♔f8 50.♕h6+ ♔e8 51.d7+ ♔f7



White's progress has been considerable. Comparing this position with the starting position, it is easy to see the amount of progress made. But there is still some way to go before the position is completely winning: 52.♘d6+ ♔e7 53.♘xb5 wins an additional pawn and leaves Black's troops in disarray. But even stronger is:

52.♖g3 ♖a7 53.♕d2!



White's threats of checking the black king on d5 and h6 lead to severe material losses for Black in the immediate future, for example after

53...♖a1+ 54.♔h2 ♕h8+ 55.♖h3

How to improve as a 'team coach'

It is not difficult to understand the metaphor of the team coach, just like it is not difficult to understand that eating a lot of raw fruits and vegetables is good for you. But if you are anything like Artur, myself and most other people on the planet, you will find that it is the vegetables in your fridge that went off – and not the biscuits which you bought last night on the way home and meant to have just

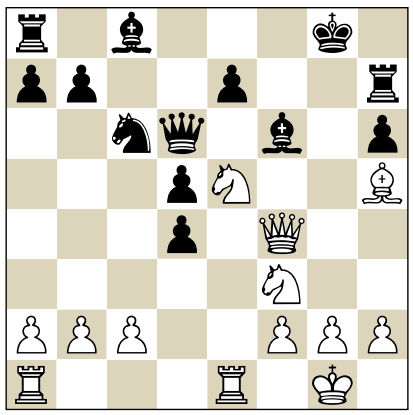
one of, share with your wife and so on, but which are now an empty package in your jacket pocket. The difference between theory and practice is, as the saying goes, a practical one. We simply lose focus.

The first thing to say is that I believe that there are many ways to do just about anything. There might be a right move in a specific position and there might be a great way to find such moves, but the move is right no matter whether you find it through *candidates, pattern recognition, elimination* or dumb luck!

While there is no easy way to keep focused at all times, I have found that asking yourself a few questions frequently can help a great deal. For example: ***Which is the worst placed piece?*** In the same way that the football trainer who manages to make the most out of the divergent talent of his players will be more successful than the trainer who does not, the chess player who has a plan for all his pieces will be more successful than the player that does not.

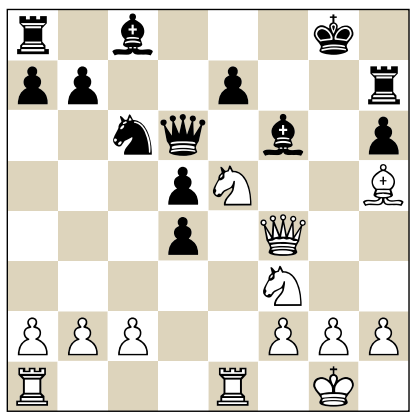
Let us take an everyday example.

Michele Godena
Danyyil Dvirnyy
Rome 2013

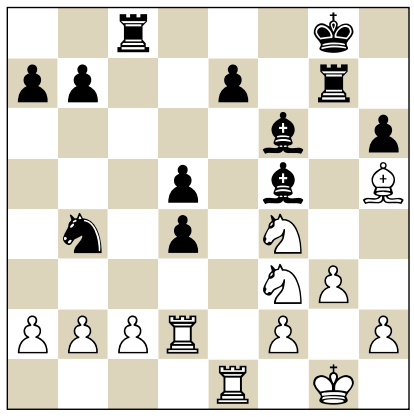


White to play – How to consolidate the advantage?

White has come out of the opening with an advantage, but the position is not fully clarified and it seems that Godena got confused about what he needed to achieve at this point. Indeed, if you aim to find the best play in this position through calculation, you would find yourself lost in confusion and maybe spend 30 minutes without feeling you were getting any wiser.



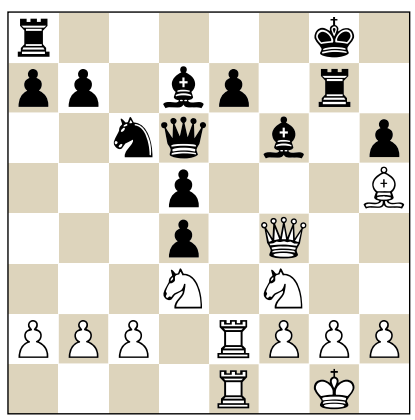
Godena played **22.g3?** when after **22...♖g7!** White found it hard to play a move. For example: 23.♖e2? ♗g5!, and White loses material. So White retreated and after **23.♘d3 ♕xf4 24.♘xf4 ♘b4 25.♖ad1 ♗f5 26.♖d2 ♖c8**



Black did not have any problems due to the counterplay against c2. Actually, he is probably the one for choice at the moment. Eventually the game ended in a draw on move 57, and later on Dvirnyy deservedly took the championship.

If White had instead **improved his worst placed piece**, the rook on a1, he would have had quite a promising position. This is of course not done by aimlessly moving the rook to d1. We need to get the most out of the rook, which means to find **the ideal square** for the rook. In this case there is little for the rook to do on d1 or c1; it is the e-file where the action is.

For this reason White should have played: 22.♖e2!, when play might well have continued: 22...♗d7 23.♖ae1 ♖g7 24.♘d3



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

White has an advantage, but the big fight still has to be fought. The size of the advantage becomes clear the moment you start considering what Black should play next.

How to determine which is the worst placed piece

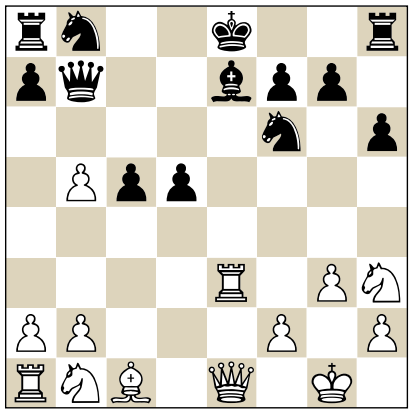
When people first encounter the idea of the worst placed piece, they want to shirk all responsibility for working out which piece we are talking about. They ask for a universal definition to work from. In a game where the lines between the opening, middlegame and endgame are blurred at the best of times, this is a big thing to ask. But it does not mean that we cannot define it.

To start off: **it is all about function**. Often we make moves without any real intentions, simply because it 'looks right'. This is one of the flaws of pattern recognition; the move might 'feel right' with a great intensity, because we have seen a number of positions where a similar decision was made. But relying on this alone is obviously flawed. Here some people will mention calculation as the solution, but as important as calculation is, it does not solve all problems (unless you calculate millions of moves per second).

Secondly, an important aspect that is rarely addressed: As the pieces

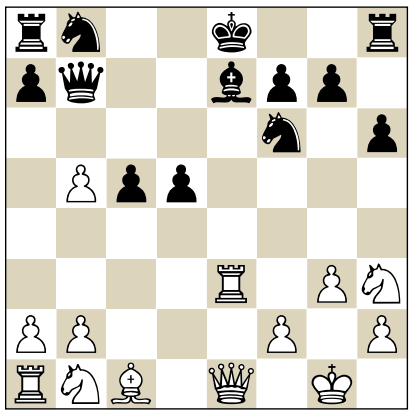
are part of a team, it is important that they do not obstruct each other unnecessarily! So, if two pieces are equally useless, think of **which piece is in the way**. Usually this is the piece you need to improve first. In the next position, things are a bit more complex, but still simple enough for us to understand.

Dmitry Jakovenko
Bartosz Socko
Khanty-Mansiysk 2012

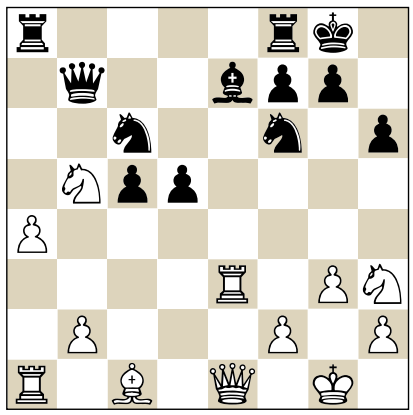


Black to play – Which is the worst placed piece?

Black's king is obviously uncomfortable on e8. Castling would be nice, but the worst placed piece is the knight on b8. The best place would be to put it on c6. So this is what Black has to achieve to solve all his problems. Socko impressed by doing this excellently, despite this being a rapid game.



15...a6!
The best move, freeing the c6-square. If Black plays somewhat slowly, White will play 16.b4! to get active counterplay.
16.♘a3
16.b4 axb5 17.bxc5 ♘c6, followed by ...0-0, leaves Black clearly better.
16...axb5 17.♘xb5 0-0! 18.a4 ♘c6



Black has a large positional advantage and won a great game on move 54.

From theory to practice

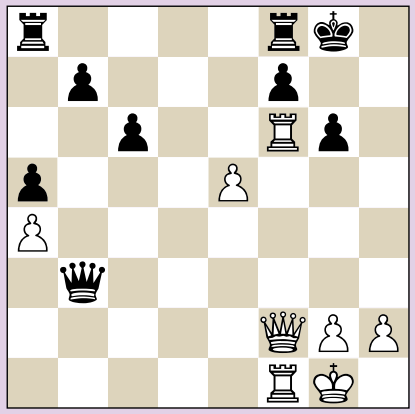
Now a five-page article is nowhere near the space needed to do more than scratch the surface of an issue as complex as piece play or even one of its subcategories, e.g. improving the worst placed piece. But hopefully this article has provoked a few of the readers into thinking more about making the most out of all of their pieces next time they are at the board. If in doubt, why not improve the worst placed piece? When your opponent is thinking, why not think of which function there is available for your pieces? Maybe think about where they would ideally be placed.

Obviously this is not a cure-all medicine, but in the same way that adding one more portion of raw green vegetable to your daily diet could prevent various lifestyle diseases, paying a bit more attention to your worst performing piece could mean a half-point difference in your next game.

But in the same way that knowing that you need to do more exercise does not improve your health, we need to actually put some action into this. For this reason I have collected three exercises which you should be able to solve heeding the big hint that it is all about finding a function for the worst placed piece.

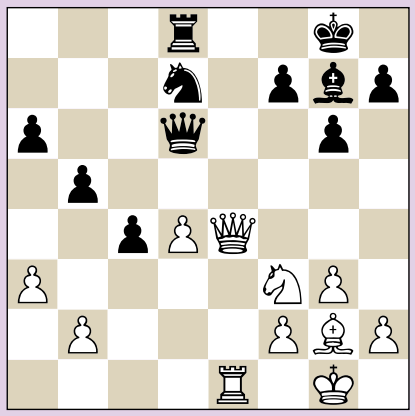
EXERCISES

Richard Rapport
Ogulcan Kanmazalp
Rhodes 2013



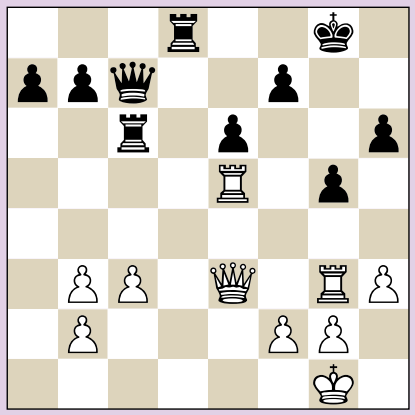
1 **Black to play – How can he stay in the game?**

Henrik Molvig
Troels Baekgaard Andersen
Skovbo 2012



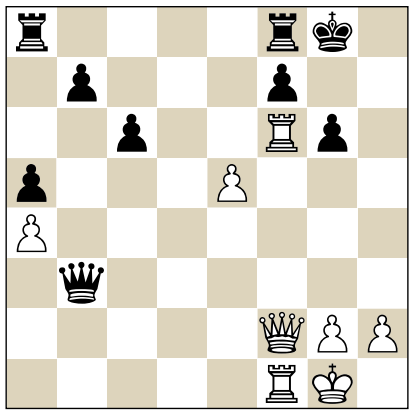
2 **Black to play – What is the best move?**

Aryan Tari
Sebastien Maze
Helsingor 2013



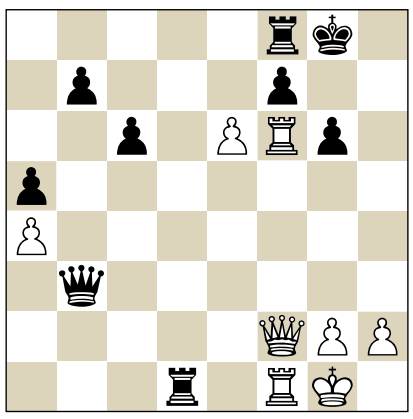
3 **Black to play – How to organize the forces?**

SOLUTION 1



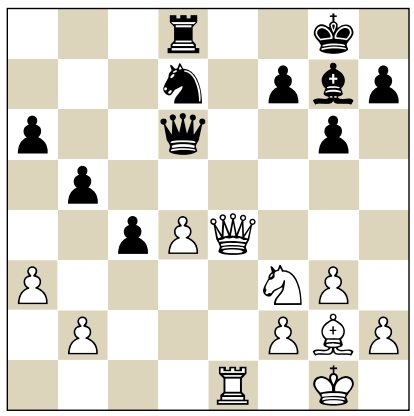
Black lost after **25...♕d5? 26.e6!** when the attack was too strong. The final moves were **26...♕e5 27.♖xf7 ♖fe8 28.♕h4 ♕h5 29.♕f6 1-0**

Instead Black should have played 25...♖ad8!! to exchange the superfluous rook. 26.e6 ♖d1!



Black is surprisingly OK. White cannot do any damage after either 27.♖xf7 ♖e8! or 27.h3 ♖xf1+ 28.♕xf1 ♕e3+ 29.♔h2 ♕e5+, when Black controls all weak squares and will be able to put his king on g7 or his pawn on b5 on the next move, with a level position.
Another idea to improve the worst placed piece, with 25...♖a6? in order to play ...c5, does not work. Simplest is 26.♖xg6+, and White wins.

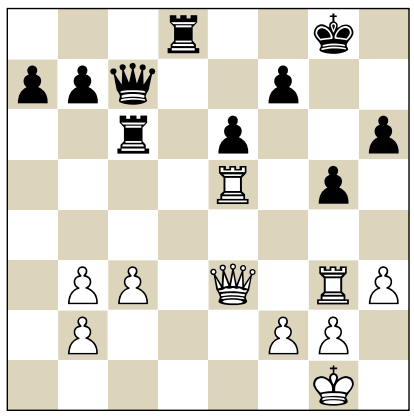
SOLUTION 2



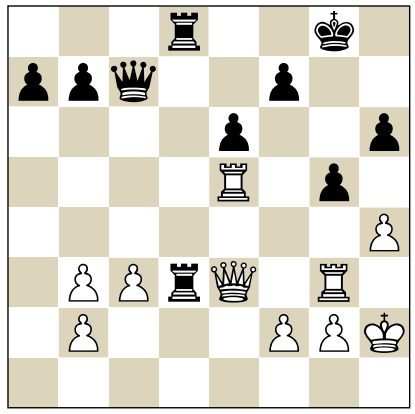
The players agreed a draw after **23...♘f6?! 24.♕b7!**

If Black had played 23...♘f8! instead, White's position would have collapsed quite quickly.

SOLUTION 3

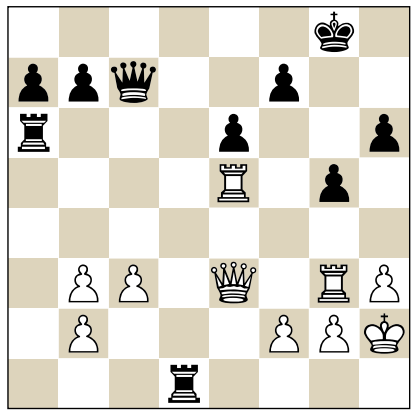


The difficulty here is that both rooks seem to want to be on d1. This led Maze to play: **30...♖cd6? 31.h4!** With Black threatening nothing, White launches an attack. **31...♖d1+ 32.♔h2 ♖1d3?**

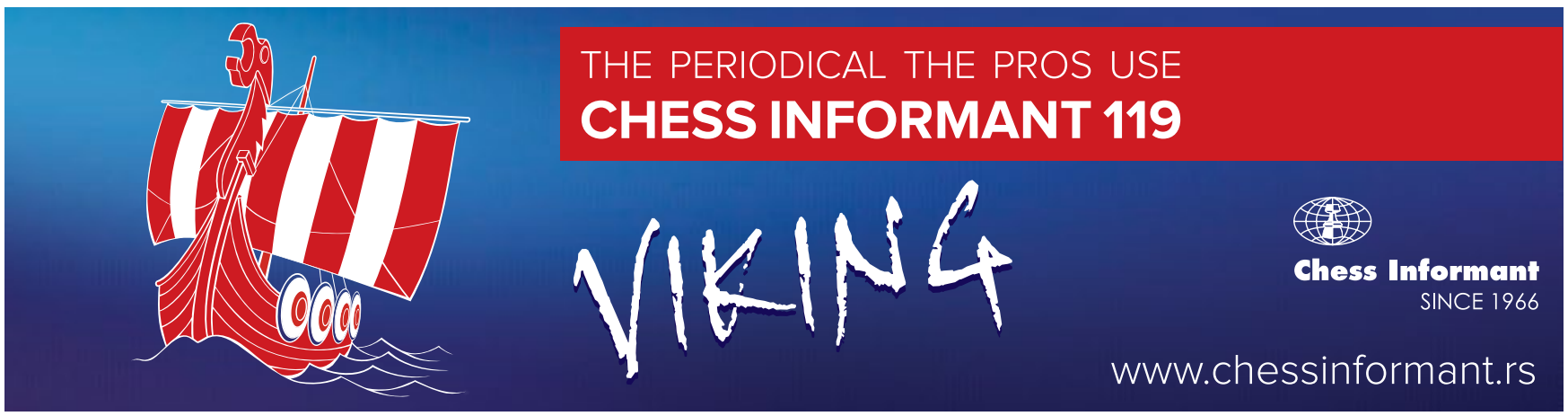


A blunder, which to Black's luck was reciprocated.
After 32...♖1d5! the black position would only be slightly worse.
Now White entered a worse rook ending which he was unable to hold with **33.♕c5?**
Instead he could probably have won the game with 33.♕f4!, when the threats to g5 and c7 are very serious.

Instead Black should have switched the rook from c6 to a1. The most accurate way is to give a check first: 30...♖d1+ 31.♔h2 ♖a6!.



I could now give a lot of variations, but to make a decision, all you have to do is look at White's immediate problems. This is enough to make a decision. ■



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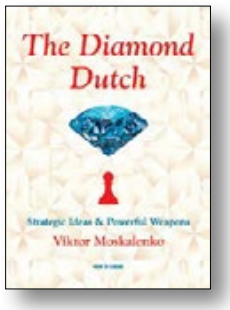

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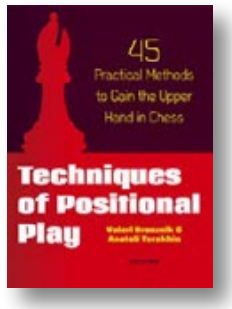

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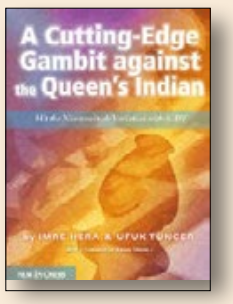

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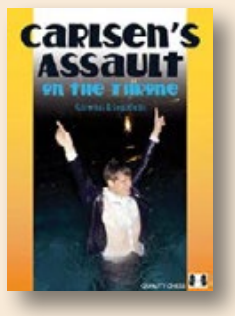

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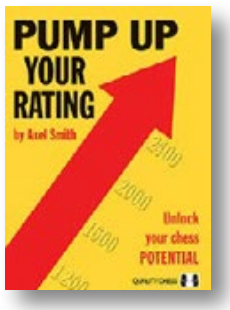

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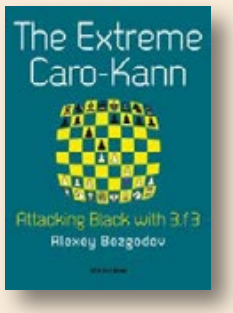

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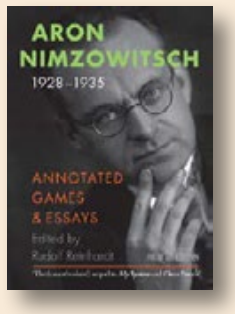

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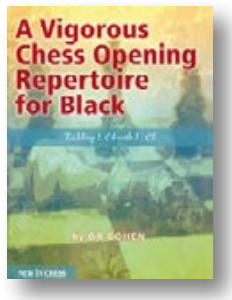

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Gibraltar, A Love Story

Ivan Cheparinov claimed the £20,000 winner's cheque at the Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival. In the final of a three-way tiebreak the Bulgarian defeated last year's winner Nikita Vitiugov from Russia. Ukraine's Mariya Muzychuk enjoyed a £15,000 payday by finishing as the best female in what must easily be the most popular Open amongst women chess players in the world. Our reporter **Simen Agdestein** has been coming to the Rock with a bunch of Norwegian students ever since the first edition in 2003 and already wants to book for next year. Who wouldn't, with an abundance of chess in a convivial atmosphere and seemingly prizes for everyone?

There is a reason why people are coming to Gibraltar year after year. Actually, there are plenty. Money is one thing. It took more than two hours in a gigantic line for everyone to pick up their prizes after the final ceremony and quite a while before that just to read out all those who had won something. The two uniformed security officers watching us said they were handing out almost 200,000 British pounds that evening. I preferred to spend my time in the discothèque downstairs – oh, yes, the organizers had thought of everything, even that! – joining the queue only now and then. It was way past midnight before the line finally diminished and

SOPHIE TRIAY

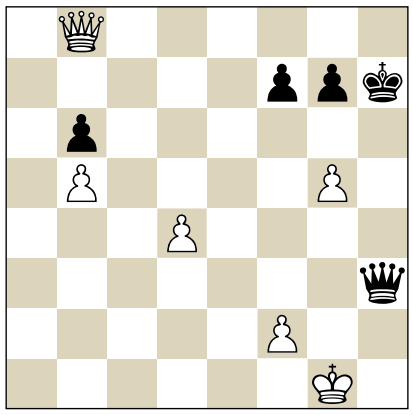
Tania Sachdev moves the ladies' pieces in the Battle of the Sexes. Tournament director Stuart Conquest acts as the emcee. To his right the main mover of the Gibraltar Festival, Brian Callaghan.

even I, with my patience, bothered to wait a little to get my prize.

Actually, I was very surprised to hear my name among the prize-winners. I came only 22nd in the Masters group, but it seemed more like an achievement not to win anything. Generosity with prizes is the trademark of the Gibraltar Festival. No one gets any starting fees; at least that's what they say. Some grandmasters get a shared room for free, but that's it. No conditions, not even for the very best, just lots of prizes. In fact, it makes a lot of sense. What matters is what you do in your next game, not what you've done before, as my old football trainer used to tell us.

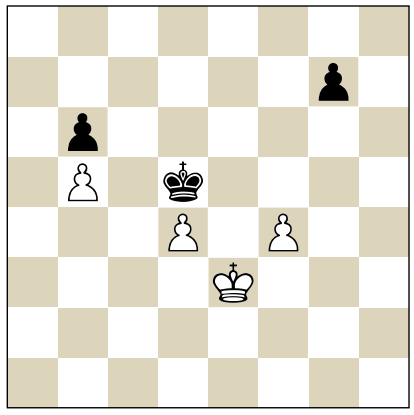
Even in the many side events, like the team blitz, the pair blitz, not to mention the battle between the sexes where six males played six women on one gigantic board, there were lots of chances to make money. In the last one, however, the £1,000 prize had to be donated to a welfare foundation. The first prize in the main event was as much as £20,000. In Gibraltar they want the whole bucket to go to one sole winner, so there's a tiebreak in case of shared first place. This time three players were involved. Vassily Ivanchuk had been leading throughout, but was forced to slow down a little in the end with two final draws, which gave Nikita Vitiugov and Ivan Cheparinov the chance to catch up. These three gladiators had to decide the issue between the finish of the last game and the banquet, so to save time one player went straight to the ultimate final by drawing lots, while the two others had to play a semi-final. You have to be lucky to win a tournament, but this was perhaps a bit more than Ivan Cheparinov had dreamt of. While Ivanchuk and Vitiugov needed four games with 10 minutes and two-second increments to decide matters, Cheparinov could calmly relax and wait for the ultimate match. Vitiugov, who won last year by beating Nigel Short 1½-½ in the same type of tiebreak, eventually managed to grind

down Ivanchuk. In the first game against Cheparinov he lost a pawn in a very level position. Cheparinov just needed to calculate the following transition:



Cheparinov-Vitiugov
Gibraltar 2014 (tiebreak-2)
position after 42...♔h7

43.♕h2! Cheparinov had only seconds to make a decision, but there's no doubt.
43...♕xh2+ 44.♔xh2 ♔g6 45.f4 f6 It was easy to see that after 45...♔f5 46.d5 Black can't reach the d-pawn. The text-move required a bit more insight.
46.gxf6 ♔xf6 47.♔g3 ♔e6 48.♔f3 ♔d5 49.♔e3



49...♔c4 Black will win the b-pawn, but White will win the race, and this is what Cheparinov needed to see already in the diagram position.
50.♔e4 ♔xb5 51.♔d5
Instead, 51.d5 ♔a6 52.♔e5 saves a tempo, but it doesn't matter.
51...♔a4 52.♔e6 b5 53.d5 b4 54.d6 b3 55.d7 b2 56.d8♕ b1♕ 57.♕a8+ ♔b3 58.♕b7+
Black resigned.

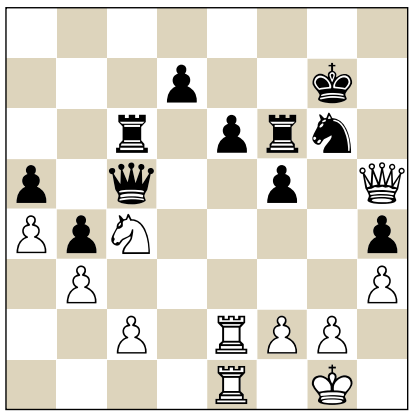
Vitiugov didn't manage to correct the score in the next game, which was fine for all those waiting for the wonderful banquet and final dinner – all players were invited – but a pity for Vitiugov, who I'm sure would have loved to play even more chess that day.

SOPHIE TRIAY

**Ivan Cheparinov took home the £ 20,000 winner's cheque.
The Bulgarian defeated last year's winner Nikita Vitiugov in the play-off.**

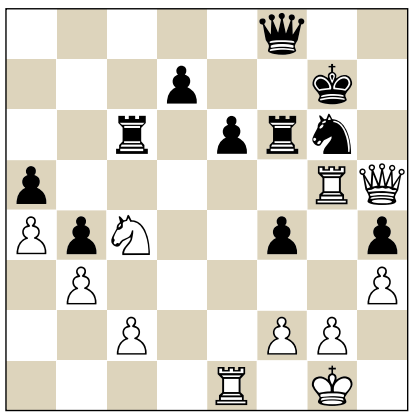
This is perhaps Ivan Cheparinov's greatest catch in his career, although he's had better performances before. Sharing first place in the European Individual Championship in 2007 was perhaps his peak sporting-wise. In Gibraltar his rating performance was only 2739, but he brought home the bacon, and I guess that's what it was all about here. In the main tournament, Cheparinov actually didn't meet so many of the top players. He only caught up with the leaders towards the end, though beating Gata Kamsky in the last round was good.

The opening and the middlegame I understood nothing of – I like to advance pawns in the middle! – but I do understand that Kamsky's next move was a blunder.



Cheparinov-Kamsky
Gibraltar 2014 (10)
position after 30.♕h5

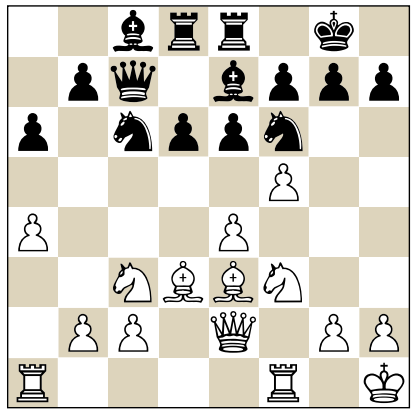
30...f4? 31.♖e5! Cheparinov grabs his chance. **31...♕f8** 31...♘xe5 32.♖xe5 is unplayable for Black. **32.♖g5!** It cannot have been Kamsky's intention to let the rook in here.



32...d6 33.♕xh4 e5 34.♕g4

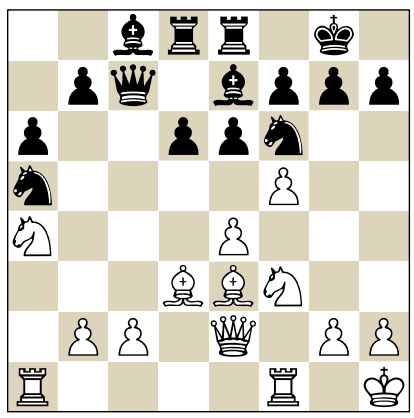
And White is simply a pawn up, which the Bulgarian safely converted to a whole point. 1-0 after 68 moves.

Ivanchuk had the best rating performance (2837), slightly ahead of Vitiugov (2825), and it wouldn't have been undeserved if any of them had taken the biggest share of the money. I was watching with admiration the following sequence between Ivanchuk and Natalia Pogonina, one of the many sweet girls that were there:



Pogonina-Ivanchuk
Gibraltar 2014 (3)
position after 16...♘f6

17.a5!? This looks like a clever move, as White has a great attack after 17...♘xa5 18.♘a4 ♘d7 19.fxe6 fxe6 20.e5 dxe5 21.♘g5. **17...♘xa5!?** Anyway? **18.♘a4**



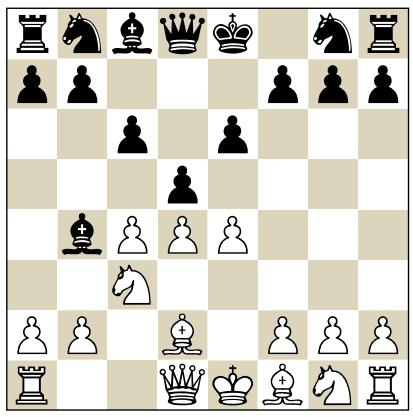
18...♘c6! This is the play of a great master. Ivanchuk simply gives up an exchange for positional compensation. **19.♗b6 ♕b8 20.♘c3** 20.♗xd8 ♗xd8 21.fxe6 ♗xe6 is very harmonious for Black, but White would at least have a material plus. After **20...exf5 21.♕f2 ♖d7 22.♘h4**

SOPHIE TRIAY

Vassily Ivanchuk had the highest rating performance. Apparently his toughest moment was at the drawing of lots, when he needed the assistance of Stuart Conquest to find out his number.

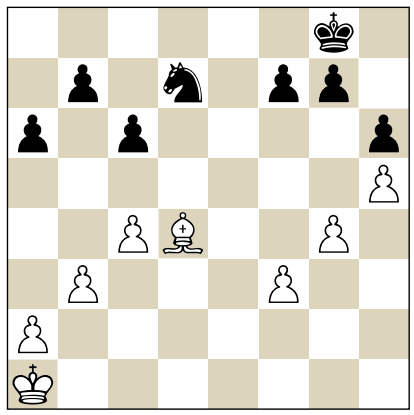
♗d8 23.♘xf5 ♗xb6 24.♕xb6 ♕a7 25.♘a4 ♖dd8 26.♘h6+ ♔f8 27.♕b3 ♗e6 28.♕c3 ♕d4 29.♕xd4 ♘xd4 there was no longer any compensation for the pawn. 0-1 after 58 moves.

One late evening I went for a walk to the little town in Gibraltar and saw only Nikita Vitiugov with Pavel Eljanov and Evgeny Tomashevsky at a pub there. 'Great players,' was my comment. 'Great rating average of the guests,' was my companion's comment. These players represent modern chess with sharp openings and unlimited braveness. I prepared the following line against someone:
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 e6 4.e4, but my opponent had the 'bail-out-line' **4...♗b4** on his repertoire.
However, a quick look at the updated Megabase showed two wins with 5.♗d2!?. Played by whom? Vitiugov and Tomashevsky!



The point is 5...dxc4 6.♗xc4 ♕xd4 7.♕e2 and calmly play on with a lead in development. And in case of 5...dxe4 6.♘xe4 ♕xd4 7.♗xb4 ♕xe4+ Black is involved in this highly theoretical battle that he tried to avoid. It's obvious that these guys take their profession seriously.

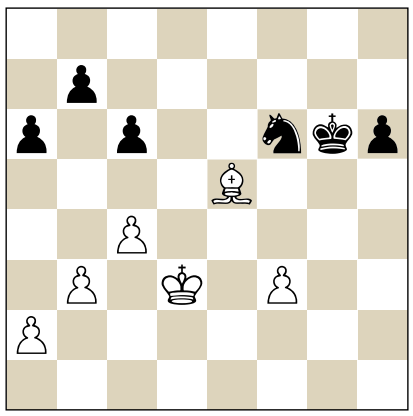
Endgame technique, however, is also part of a great tactician's weaponry. There was more of that than ultramodern opening ideas in Vitiugov's games in Gibraltar. Here's a smooth example.



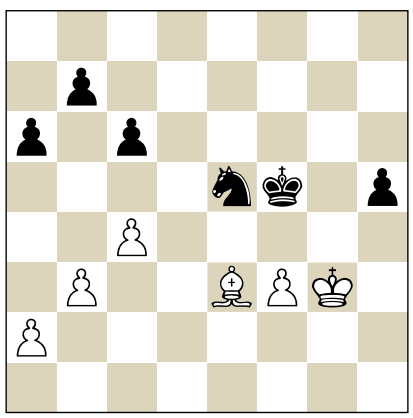
Ganguly-Vitiugov
Gibraltar 2014 (9)
position after 36. ♗d4

At first glance it may not seem so obvious who is better. Bishops are better than knights with pawns on both sides, I've learned, but soon another theme becomes more prominent.
36...f5 37.♔b2 ♔f7 38.gxf5
This would soon be forced anyway.

38...♘f6 39.♔c3 ♘xh5 40.♗e5 ♘f6 41.♔d3 g6 42.fxg6+ ♔xg6
Now we have a situation with an outside pawn, another well-known topic in endgame theory.

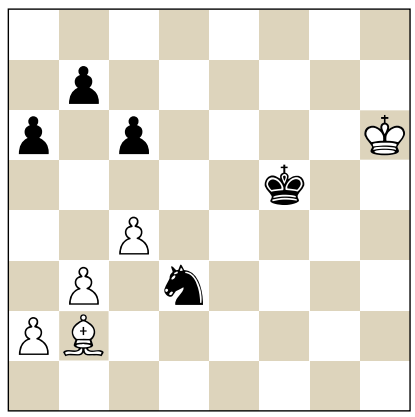


43.♔e3 ♔f5 44.♗d6 h5 45.♔f2 ♘h7 46.♔g3 ♘g5 47.♗c5 ♘f7 48.♗d4 ♘e5 49.♗e3 ♘d3 50.♗d2 ♘e5 51.♗e3



51...h4+!

Finally Black plays his trump card. The point of a distant passed pawn is to draw the king away to open the path for the enemy monarch.
52.♔xh4 ♘xf3+ 53.♔h5 ♘e5
Now comes an interesting battle between the knight and the bishop.
54.♗c1 ♘d3 55.♗d2 ♘c5 56.♗c1 ♘e4 57.♗b2 ♘f2 58.♔h6 ♘d3

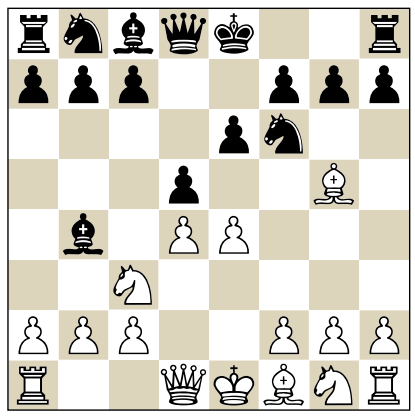


59.♗a3 Ganguly needs to prevent ...♘c1, but now the bishop is trapped.
59...c5 60.♔g7 ♔e6 0-1
White is not given a glimpse of counterplay and b5 and b4 will soon pick up the bishop.

Another player who won a huge sum in Gibraltar was Mariya Muzychuk (21), who took the prize for the best female player. I met her in the last round and didn't know that she actually was fighting for £15,000. And a GM-norm. For so many years I've been telling my students to keep 'the right focus', and that is not on money. In this game I actually had a chance to win a bit, too, but it didn't enter my mind for a second. On the other hand, I'm not sure it would have influenced the play.

FR 5.3 – C12
Mariya Muzychuk
Simen Agdestein
Gibraltar 2014 (10)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗b4!?



All I was thinking about was to play interesting chess. I had tried this a few rounds earlier against the young Canadian Eric Hansen without knowing too much of the enormous wealth

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of spectacular lines that there actually are here. Now I was slightly more prepared, and was wondering whether my opponent had seen my failure earlier in the tournament.

5.e5 h6 6.♗e3

Hansen played 6.♗c1, and that was the end of my knowledge in that line.

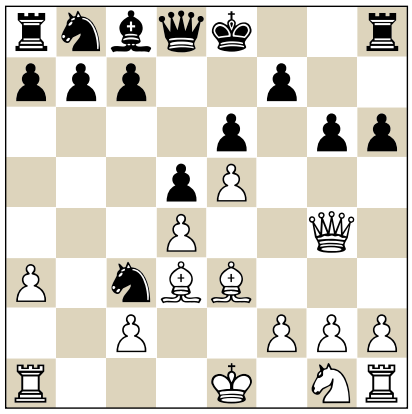
6...♘e4 7.a3

I knew 7.♕g4 is normal. Muzychuk's move order made me think a little.

7...♗xc3+

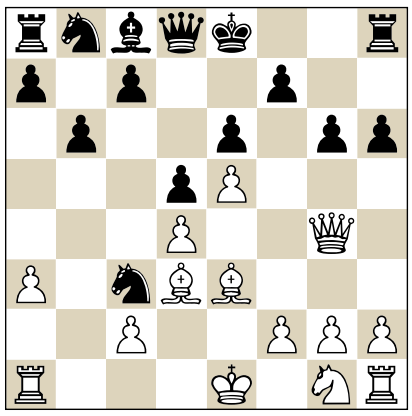
I just needed to see 7...♘xc3 8.♕g4 ♗a5 9.♕xg7 ♖f8 10.♗xh6 ♕e7 11.♗d2, a well-known theme, and Black can resign. But 8...♗f8 was an option.

8.bxc3 ♘xc3 9.♕g4 g6 10.♗d3



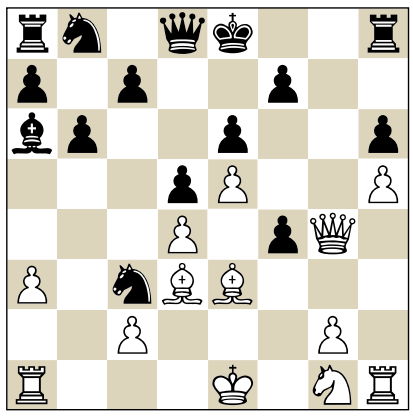
10...b6

When I came home, I discovered a great book on the French – *Playing the French* by Jacob Aagaard and Nikolaos Ntirlis (Quality Chess 2013) – lying on my desk, no less, and now I know that 10...c5 is the main line. But perhaps my decision was just as good, as my Ukrainian opponent seemed to be well prepared.



11.♘f3

I was inspired by Hikaru Nakamura, a creative monster, and the rapidgame Gashimov-Nakamura, Monaco 2011, which went 11.h4 ♗a6 12.h5 g5 13.f4 gxf4



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

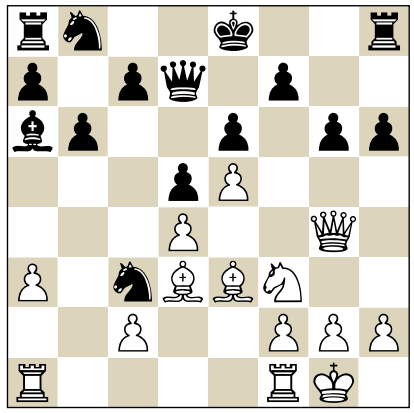
14.♗xf4 ♔d7 15.♗d2 ♘e4 16.♗xe4 dxe4 17.♕xe4 ♔c8 18.♘f3 ♗b7 19.♕f4 ♖h7 20.0-0-0 ♕d5 21.♕g4 ♔d7? (21...♕a2 22.♕g8+ ♔d7 23.♗c3 ♗e4 would have been the exact move order, as now White had the chance 22.♗xh6!) 22.♕g8 ♕a2 23.♗c3 ♗e4 24.♗b2 ♕c4 25.♖d2 ♘a6 26.♕g4 ♗d5, and Black had a great game. As Aagaard & Ntirlis point out (and as was also shown in the game Naiditsch-Stellwagen, Wijk aan Zee 2006) White may get an advantage with 14.♕g7 ♔d7 15.♕xf7+ ♕e7 16.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 17.♗xf4, but this is unexplored and therefore interesting territory, at least for me.

11...♗a6

I wasn't sure what White was playing for and thought I was making natural moves.

12.0-0 Running with the h-pawn obviously was not to her liking.

12...♕d7



13.♖fe1 Very slow, but far from stupid. Preventing a check on e2 is essential in many lines.

13...♗xd3

I wasn't so happy about opening the c-line and had problems finding good squares for my knights, but what else?

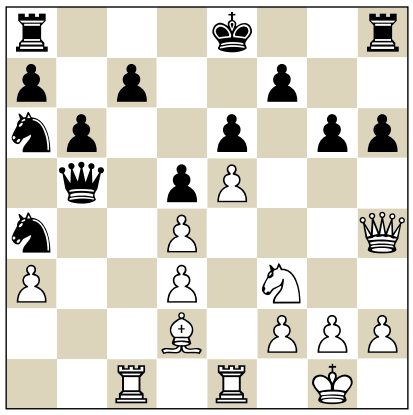
14.cxd3 ♕b5

Extremely materialistic, but the point of no return seemed to have been already passed, I thought. My chance in this position is to grab pawns. Everything else about the black position is horrible.

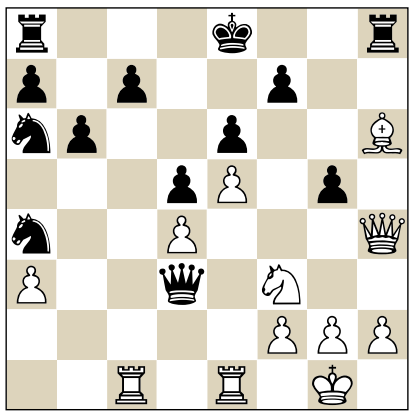
15.♗d2 ♘a4 16.♖ac1 ♘a6 17.♕h4

SOPHIE TRIAY

Both Tan Zhongyi and Mariya Muzychuk fought gripping battles with our reporter. The youngest of the Muzychuk sisters had every reason to smile, as she earned a whopping £15,000.



17...g5?
I saw 17...♕xd3 18.♗xh6 g5

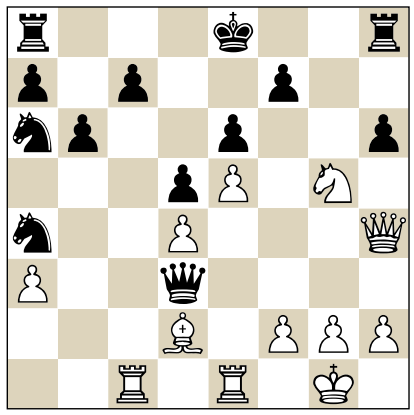


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

19.♕xg5 ♕h7 20.♕d2 ♕xh6 21.♕c2 and now the smart 21...♘4c5 22.dxc5 ♘xc5, and Black is fine. But I didn't like my rook on h7 in the line 18.♕f6 ♖h7 19.♗xh6 ♕f5 (19...♖xh6 20.♕g7 wins back a rook) 20.♗g5 ♕xf6 21.♗xf6, but that is actually a minor problem considering the counterplay I get with 21...c5. However, with computer assistance I suddenly discover 19.♗g5! (instead of 19.♗xh6), and White will be an exchange up after the forced 19...hxg5 20.♘xg5 ♕f5 21.♘xh7. This line actually put my whole setup in question. I hope Nakamura can play some more games with this line and show me how Black is supposed to play.

18.♘xg5
I was calculating lines like 18.♗xg5 ♕xd3 19.♗f6 ♖g8 20.♖e3 ♕g6 21.♘e1 ♔d7 22.♖g3 ♕h7 23.♕h5, and I've saved the day on the kingside, but I was wondering whether I would lose on the queenside with my silly knights. Muzychuk's move is much stronger.

18...♕xd3

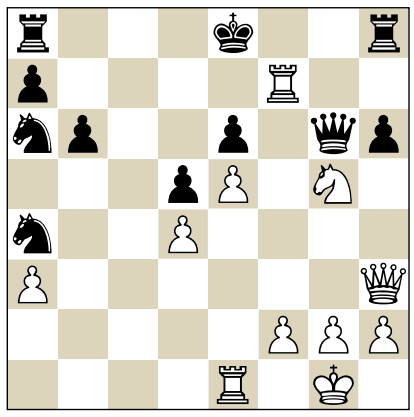


19.♗b4? I thought I had defensive resources after both 19.♘xf7 ♖h7 and 19.♘xe6 ♕xd2, but according to the computer that is completely wrong. White apparently is clearly winning in both these lines.

19...♘xb4
I was of course very worried that I would be mated, but saw nothing else.

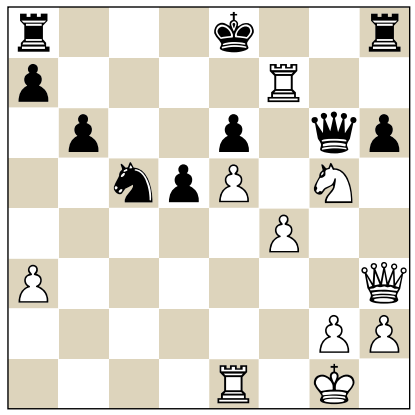
20.♖xc7 ♘a6 21.♖xf7
I was calculating intensively 21.♘xe6 ♘xc7 22.♘xc7+ ♔d7 23.♘xd5 ♕c4 (the only move, I thought, and the computer agrees), but I was far from sure of the outcome when White suddenly and fairly quickly took on f7 instead.

21...♕g6 22.♕h3
It's strange how little one sees. Even this came as a surprise to me.



22...♘6c5!? It's better with one knight protecting e6 than two knights on the rim doing nothing, I thought, and I couldn't resist the coolness of the logic. I felt a bit disharmonious after 22...hxg5 23.♕xh8+ ♔xf7 24.♕xa8, but it's actually White who has problems coordinating her pieces after 24...♕c2! 25.♕xa7+ ♘c7, and I have potential for my knight on a4.

23.dxc5 ♘xc5 24.f4

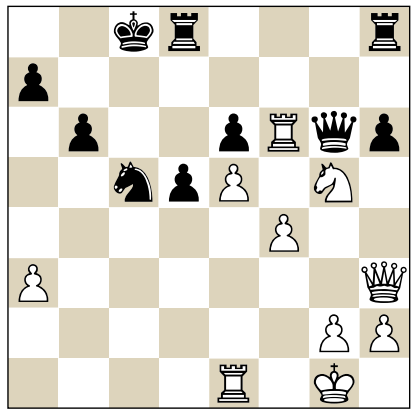


24...0-0-0?! Confusion takes over. I calculated 24...♕d3 25.♕h5 hxg5 26.♕xh8+ ♔xf7 27.♕xa8 ♕d4+ 28.♔h1 ♘d3 29.♕xa7+ ♔g6 30.f5+

> 'My central pawns combined with the risk of losing £15,000 certainly is quite a lot to worry about for a young woman from Ukraine.'

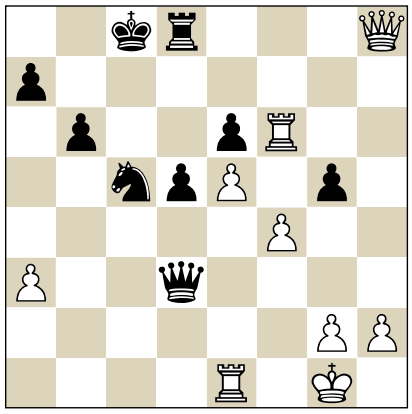
♔h6, but of course 26.♖h7+ is the end to that line. However, 25...0-0-0 (instead of 25...hxg5) is perfectly OK for Black.

25.♖f6



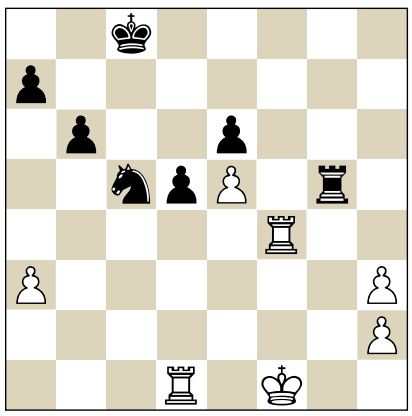
25...hxg5?? I think the limits of my calculating powers had been reached in this game. After 25...♕d3 the position is complex and still interesting.

26.♕xh8 ♕d3



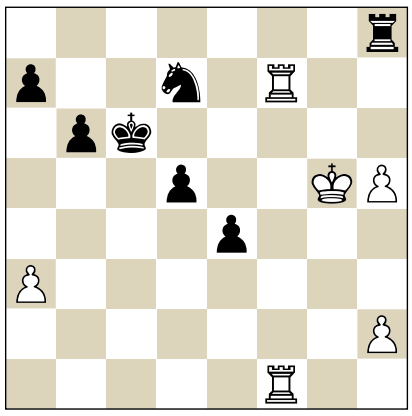
27.♕h3?? Luckily, my opponent seemed to have reached some limit too. She thought I had counterplay after 27.♖f8 ♕d4+ 28.♔h1 ♘d3 29.♖xd8+ ♔b7 (29...♔c7 30.♖c1+!), but after 30.♖d7+ ♔a6 31.♕c8+ ♔b5 32.♖b1+ I can resign.

27...♕xh3 28.gxh3 gxf4 Now it's unclear again! **29.♖d1 ♖g8+ 30.♔f1 ♖g5 31.♖xf4**



31...♔b7 I didn't like 31...♖xe5 32.♖f7, but I should have put my king on c7 or even d7. Losing the a-pawn doesn't matter here. The question is what comes first, White's h-pawns or my central pawns.

32.h4 ♖xe5 33.♔f2 ♖h5 34.♔f3 ♔c6 35.♔g4 ♖h8 36.h5 ♘d7 37.♖df1 e5 38.♖f7 e4 39.♔g5

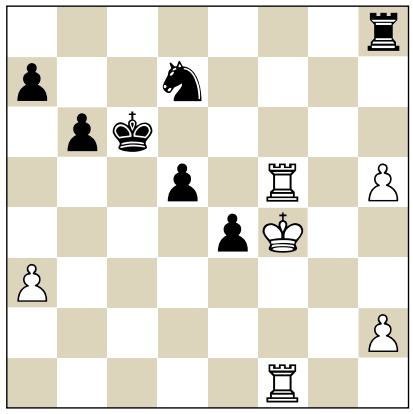


SOPHIE TRIAY

For his share in the masterpiece he created together with Mickey Adams, Brazilian GM Alexandr Fier won half of the £ 1,000 beauty prize. His wife Nino Maisuradze is happy for him.

39...♖g8+? I knew instinctively that this was very stupid, but time was ticking down to zero. Who knows what the outcome would have been after 39...d4! My central pawns combined with the risk of losing £15,000 certainly is quite a lot to worry about for a young woman from Ukraine.

40.♔f4 ♖h8 41.♖f5

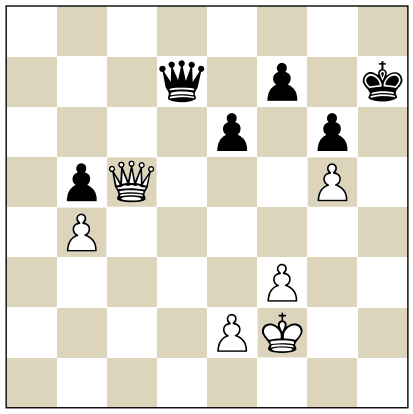


Suddenly my opponent offered a draw. I had to ask if I heard right. David Navara commented that he thought it was a bit early to resign when he saw us shaking hands. I was convinced I was lost, and accepted of course with a rather bad feeling. Later I understood the rationale. Muzychuk had everything to lose with a loss and not much more to win with a full point.

But what a prize-fund for the women! The first prize went to little sister Muzychuk, but Zhao Xue and Natalia Zhukova must have been very pleased to share the same amount. Second prize was £10,000 and third prize £5,000.

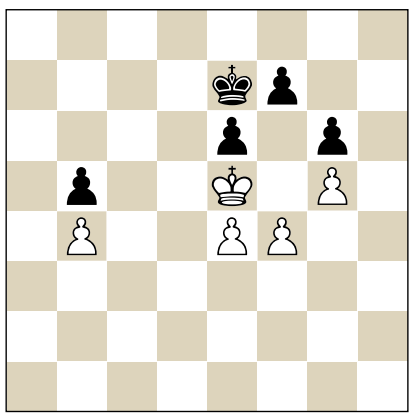
There were prizes for different rating and age categories as well. I was very happy to see Ulf Andersson (62), Sweden's old superstar, getting the senior prize. My old Nordic hero! (Bent Larsen was before my time.) Uffe was ranked number four in the world in 1983. Ivanchuk has been ranked number two on a couple of lists and Kamsky was as high as number three at one moment. Nigel Short was a World Championship contender. If we linger on the past a little, after all these are all achievements that deserve respect. Andersson is certainly high on the list of high-profile players to have played in Gibraltar.

Chess has changed a lot in the last decades, but Andersson seemed to stick to his good old style, which means trying to get something out of tiny endgame edges. Too many of his games end in draws, though. In Gibraltar the Swedish giant only won two games. The following is a classical Andersson win.



Andersson-Quintin
Gibraltar 2014 (7)
position after 50. ♔h7

It's of course very little, but White can make a risk-free attempt.
51.♔e3 ♔g8 52.♔e4 ♕b7+ 53.♔e5 ♕b8+ 54.♕d6 ♕c8 55.♔f6 ♕f8 56.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 57.f4 ♔e8 58.♔e5 ♔d7 59.e3 ♔e7 60.e4



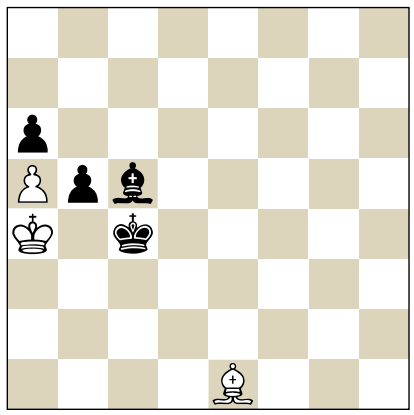
60...f6+?
The only problem with this endgame is that Black actually could have drawn it. After 60...♔d7 61.f5 ♔e7 Black has the opposition, and in the very long line 61.♔f6 ♔e8 62.f5 exf5 63.exf5 gxf5 64.♔xf5 ♔f8 65.♔e5 ♔g7 66.♔d5 ♔g6 67.♔c5 ♔xg5 68.♔xb5 f5 69.♔c4 ♔f6 Black's king is just in time to catch up with the b-pawn.
61.gxf6+ ♔f7 62.♔d6! ♔xf6 63.e5+ ♔f5 64.♔e7 ♔xf4 65.♔xe6 g5 66.♔d5 1-0

I heard some talk about lowering the senior limit from 60 to 50 years, and there are rumours that Nigel Short has got World Championship ambitions again. You never get too old to win an age class in chess!

Short won the two first Gibraltar tournaments and repeated this achievement in 2012 and was close last year. The festival, or any tournament he takes part in, perhaps, wouldn't be quite the same without him. I had a long game one evening and suddenly heard Short behind my back loudly proclaim: 'Checkmate!' I rose up and saw the following posi-

> 'Suddenly I heard Short behind my back loudly proclaim: Checkmate!'

tion and then Short demonstratively writing down half a point to each on the score sheet.



Pogonina-Short
Gibraltar 2014 (7)

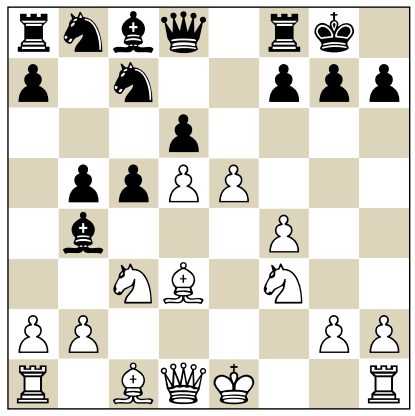
½-½. Guess what the last move was!

Michael Adams, the other British star, is more predictable. He's as stable as you can get and will always perform well. However, this time he was involved in the game that won the brilliancy prize and that was anything but predictable. You don't need to understand great masterpieces, I've heard. It's possible just to enjoy them.

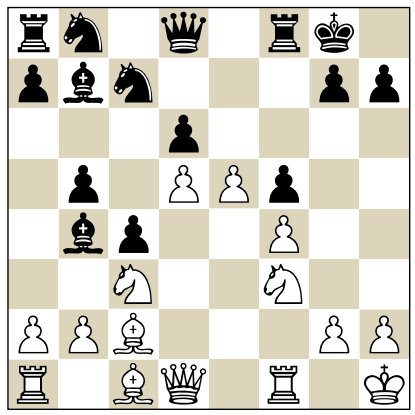
I therefore take the liberty of not even trying to understand the following. I hope the diagrams make this understandable. I mean my decision not even to try...

NI 30.1 – E20
Alexandr Fier
Michael Adams
Gibraltar 2014 (4)

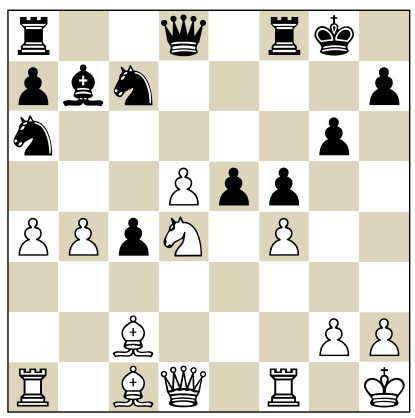
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.f3 c5 5.d5 b5 6.e4 0-0 7.e5 ♘e8 8.f4 d6 9.♘f3 exd5 10.cxd5 ♘c7 11.♗d3



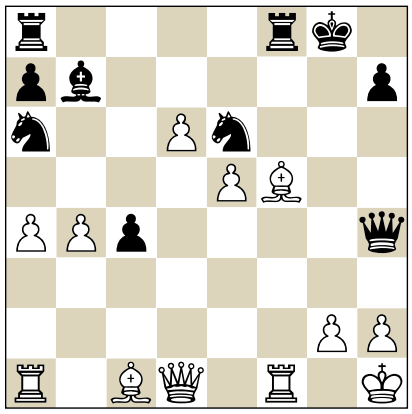
11...f5 12.0-0 c4 13.♗c2 ♗b7 14.♔h1



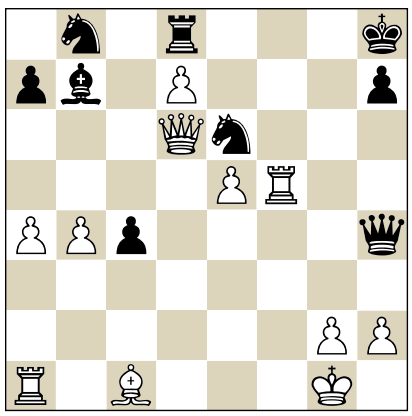
14...♘ba6 15.a4 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 b4 17.♘d4 g6 18.cxb4 dxe5



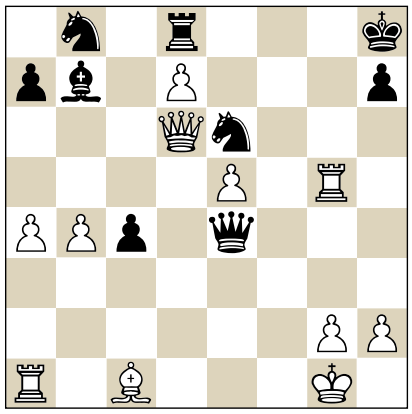
19.♘xf5 gxf5 20.d6 ♘e6 21.fxe5 ♕h4 22.♗xf5



22...♖xf5 23.♖xf5 ♔h8 24.d7 ♖d8 25.♔g1 ♘b8 26.♕d6?



26...♕g4 The computer screams out 26...♘xd7 27.♕xe6 ♕d4+ and Black is winning! **27.♖g5 ♕e4**



28.♗d2 Now White was supposed to be winning with 28.h3!. **28...♖xd7 29.♕xe6 ♕d4+ 30.♔f1 ♕d3+ 31.♔g1 ♕d4+ 32.♔f1** Draw.
A good battle, which was rewarded with £1,000 to share for the two players.

This report may seem overly positive, so I guess it's right to inform the reader that my impartiality is highly questionable. I was here at the first tournament, in 2003, with a group of students, and since then we, and especially my students, have come back year after year. Odin Blikra Vea, the most resilient of us, has been there all 12 times. The Swedish-Spanish GM-couple Pia Cramling and Juan Bellon and even their 12-year-old daughter Anna, who was minus 2 months at that first event, have also been here every time.

The arbiters also deserve praise. There's a group here that has done unselfish work for the chess community for ages. I don't know how much attention you get, but you're certainly appreciated!

I also love the view from the room at the Caleta Hotel. It's either the Mediterranean or, if you're on the other side, the Rock. You can't go wrong. It's the same hotel, the same reception, the same Peter and his bus that meets us at Malaga airport, the same hotel director, the same staff, the same arbiters, the same fully packed programme, except that it seems to develop and expand a bit, but that's just fine. Even the players are the same. At least very many of them. It's not just us, the young Norwegians, who affix this festival on the calendar early. This time there were players from 80 different countries, altogether 250 participants in the Masters group and many more in the two morning tournaments and the many side events. And many were on the waiting list. The playing hall has its space limitations. In the Masters group there is room for only about 250 players and then it's quite packed. Sitting so close to so many of the world's best players is actually just nice, but it can be demanding for the air conditioning sometimes.

I had a bad experience last time I was there, I have to admit, but that had nothing to do with Gibraltar actually. I had taken part in a TV programme just before, where I was supposed to play 'chess-boxing' against a so-called comedian. I was told by the German arbiter, a serious guy who had invented this sport, that I had to be a bit careful, of course, as we were total amateurs in boxing and it could be dangerous to hit each other with full strength. But 'the comedian' went all out for a knockout and managed to hit my head many times. The idea was to box one minute and play chess for two minutes, and of course his only

SOPHIE TRIAY

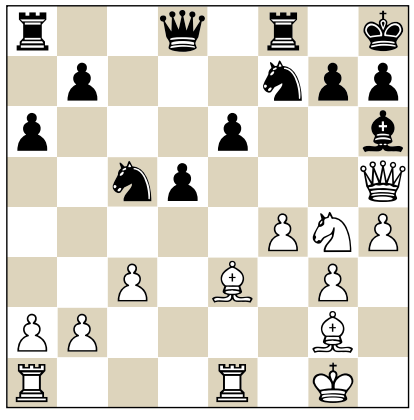
Juan Bellon, Pia Cramling and their daughter Anna have attended all the Gibraltar Festivals so far. Anna was minus 2 months when she first came to the Rock.

chance was in the ring. He almost succeeded. I had a terrible headache for the next three months and it took 10 appointments at the chiropractor to alleviate the worst effects and many more months to recover fully. So it was in this state I played here last time, and it's strange how bad memories can be connected to places, despite a total lack of connection.

But now all good memories are restored. I enjoyed everything this time. The dinner at St. Michael Cave inside the rock was particularly spectacular. Simply the hospitality and generosity. The devil is in the details, I've heard, so here the devil must have been whipping around a lot.

Actually I think I would like to book places for next year's event already now. Is that OK, Stuart? Me and most likely a group of 30 young Norwegian chess players.

No story would be complete without a love angle, I presume. And I confess: I fell in love during the tournament. It was a very silly infatuation and as usual it ended in disaster. Almost. I was playing a charming young Chinese woman, but that didn't knock me out. It was a mating motif that turned me crazy!



Agdestein-Tan Zhongyi
Gibraltar 2014 (3)
position after 27. ♗e3

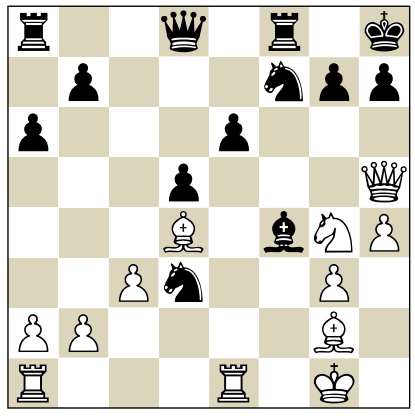
It started in this position. After 27... g6 there is the wonderful mate 28.♕xh6 ♘xh6 29.♗d4+ ♔g8 30.♘xh6. How can a man resist!

27...♘d3

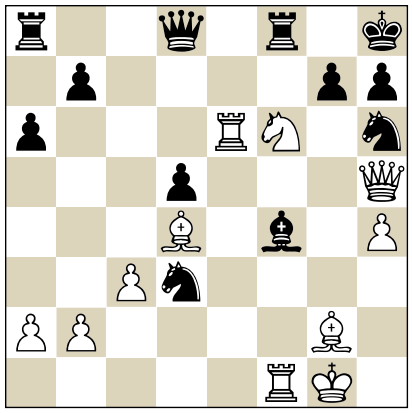
She saw this, of course, and if I now move my rook, the mate motif is gone, as Black can throw in ...e6-e5 after a check on d3.

28.♗d4! The position is, of course, enormous. After 28...♘xe1 I thought I could just take back, but 29.♘xh6 also wins easily.

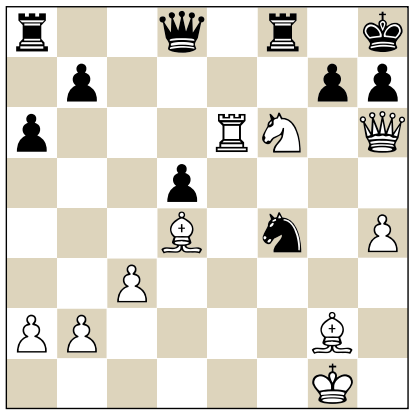
28...♗xf4 I guess she also had dreams of trapping my queen.



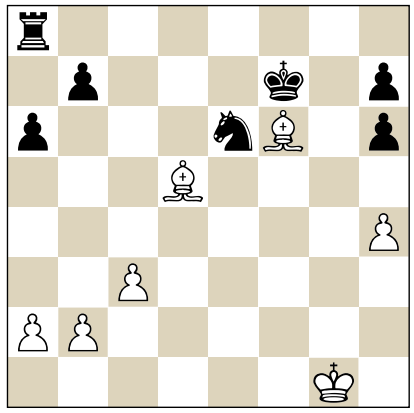
29.♖xe6 I don't fall for 29.gxf4 ♘xf4, and my queen is actually lost.
29...♗xg3 30.♘f6
The attack plays itself.
30...♘h6 31.♖f1 Just to include all the pieces in the attack. **31...♗f4**



32.♖xf4??
I saw 32.♘xd5, and everything falls apart for Black. Houdini gives +21 after 32.♘xh7. That is just a gigantic mating attack. Is it possible to have a better position! Alas, it was this love thing. I could only think of that first motif with mate with bishop and knight, and as usual when you get too emotional, you get too eager.
32...♘xf4 33.♕xh6



People were crowding around the board and I was thinking of Paul Morphy and Mona Lisa on the wall after 33...gxh6 34.♘g4+ ♔g8 35.♘xh6 mate.
33...♖xf6
Well, 34.♖xf6 gxh6 35.♖f8+ is quite a nice mate too. But hang on! There's a check on e2 and taking my pride and joy on d4 and my queen and rook would simply be forked at the end.
34.♗xf6 ♘xe6! Was that legal??
35.♗xd8 gxh6 36.♗f6+ ♔g8 37.♗xd5 ♔f7
The game isn't quite over. My bishops are still nice, but it reminds me of the Monty Python sketch where the brave knight keeps on bragging despite both his arms and legs having been cut off.



38.♗e5 ♖g8+ 39.♔f2 b5 Draw.
My opponent had respect for the bishop pair – it couldn't have been me after what I had just done – and offered a draw, which I gladly accepted. The moral is clear: Don't fall in love! But in Gibraltar the temptation is there. ■

SOPHIE TRIAY

There were 'many sweet girls' in Gibraltar. At the closing dinner Simen Agdestein enjoyed the company of Margit Brokko from Estonia and Olga Dolzhykova from Ukraine.

Gibraltar 2014

					TPR
1	Vassily Ivanchuk	UKR	2739	8	2846
2	Nikita Vitiugov	RUS	2737	8	2832
3	Ivan Cheparinov	BUL	2672	8	2742
4	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	FRA	2745	7½	2807
5	Maxim Rodshtein	ISR	2682	7½	2780
6	Li Chao	CHN	2680	7½	2735
7	Baskaran Adhiban	IND	2590	7½	2720
8	Alexey Dreev	RUS	2673	7½	2712
9	Mohammed Al-Sayed	QAT	2476	7½	2672
10	Michael Adams	ENG	2754	7	2717
11	Richard Rapport	HUN	2691	7	2709
12	Pentala Harikrishna	IND	2706	7	2705
13	Gata Kamsky	USA	2709	7	2693
14	Eric Hansen	CAN	2559	7	2679
15	Romain Edouard	FRA	2658	7	2676
16	David Navara	CZE	2702	7	2672
17	Evgeny Tomashevsky	RUS	2715	7	2668
18	Sergei Movsesian	ARM	2677	7	2668
19	Mariya Muzychuk	UKR	2503	7	2654
20	Wei Yi	CHN	2607	7	2650
21	Ivan Salgado	ESP	2597	7	2642
22	Simen Agdestein	NOR	2627	7	2616
23	Saleh A.R. Salem	UAE	2564	7	2596
24	Thomas Henrichs	GER	2477	7	2569
25	Zhao Xue	CHN	2567	7	2566
26	Natalia Zhukova	UKR	2449	7	2558
27	Sandro Mareco	ARG	2582	6½	2633

Ivan Cheparinov won the three-way playoff

150 players, 9 rounds

Jan Timman

Wijk aan Zee on a Shoestring

The **Tata Steel Challengers** saw a neck-and-neck race between Ivan Saric and Baadur Jobava that the Croatian GM decided in his favour when his Georgian rival ran out of steam. **Jan Timman** notes that 'at the age of 62 there are limits to your energy', but that didn't stop him from catching up with Jobava to share second place. And play his most spectacular game in years.

As per tradition, Aronian gave the winner's speech during the closing ceremony of the Tata Steel tournament, extending a special thank-you to all the volunteers who had, once again, made the tournament possible. Some time later, he returned to the stage to give another special word of thanks to Jeroen van den Berg for gathering such a strong field of participants on such a severely cut-down budget – adding, with a touch of irony, that he himself would never in his life have managed this.

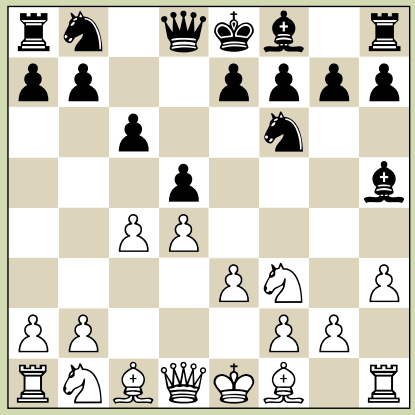
Van den Berg's efforts paid off even more for the Challengers, which had an extremely tight budget. In the last few years, it had been customary for that group to be a mixture of top male players, top female players, juniors, seniors and a national contingent. They had done the same this year. It is actually not so very difficult to get 2700+ players, because there are alarmingly few Category 14 and 15 tournaments around, and only the absolute world top can be sure of invitations to the most prestigious events.

There were also two promoted players from the amateur groups. As a result, there was an enormous difference in rating between top and bottom, almost 300 points. For that reason, it seemed to me that you would need quite a high score to win the tournament. I was thinking 9½ points. The eventual winner turned out to have even half a point more. Wojtaszek was the big favourite. He had just won two tournaments in Switzerland with superior strength. But it quickly became clear that he had basically expended himself there. In Round 1, he immediately lost as White against Reinderman, and he seemed to find it hard to regain his confidence. For this reason, the tournament looked like turning into a two-horse race between Jobava and Saric right from the start. The latter started with two draws, but then he hit his stride. Here is his own analysis of his first win, against the 15-year-old American Troff.

NOTES BY
Ivan Saric

SL 1.6 – D11
Kayden Troff
Ivan Saric
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (4)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 ♗g4 5.h3 ♗h5



6.cxd5 6.♘c3 e6 is the main line here. **6...cxd5** 6...♗xf3 7.♕xf3 cxd5

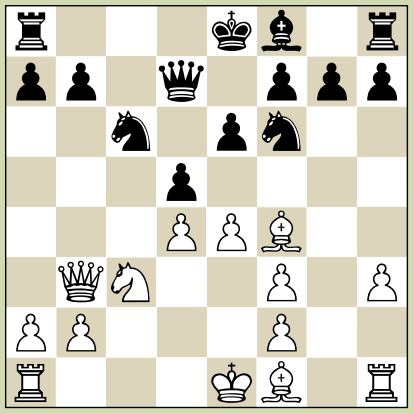
is more common, when Black has a solid position, although without the bishop pair. I don't see any reason why Black should give up his bishop if he isn't forced to.

7.♕b3 ♕c7 8.♘c3 ♗xf3

8...e6 is not bad either: 9.♘e5 ♘c6 10.♗d2 ♗e7 11.♖c1 0-0 12.g4 ♗g6, and Black is fine.

9.gxf3 e6 10.e4 ♘c6 11.♗f4 ♕d7

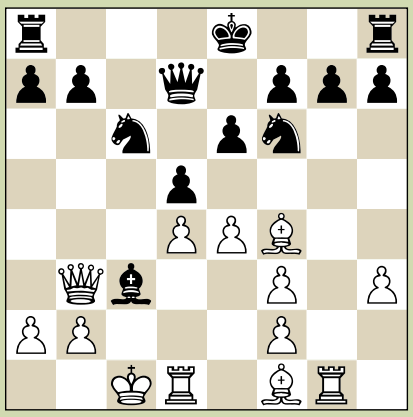
During the game I thought that 11...♕xf4 was not far from losing. But actually, White's advantage is questionable after 12.♕xb7 ♖b8 13.♕xc6+ ♔d8 14.♗g2 ♖xb2 15.0-0 ♕c7.



12.0-0-0 Up to this point, my opponent had played very fast. All this had been seen before in the game Popov-Inarkiev, Moscow 2010. I wanted to castle kingside, but the problem is that after the most natural move, 12...♗e7, White has 13.♖g1, when castling kingside is not good because 14.♗h6 will cost material. I realized that I should get rid of the white knight to alleviate the pressure on d5.

12...♗b4!? This is a new move.

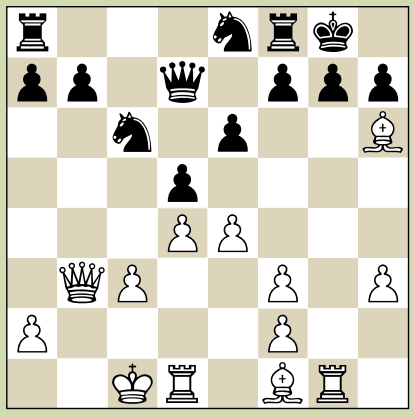
13.♖g1 ♗xc3



14.bxc3

In my opinion, 14.♕xc3 was better, because taking the pawn on e4 is almost never a good option for Black. After the text-move White will only have additional pawn weaknesses and more problems with his king safety. So, best was 14.♕xc3 0-0 (14...dxe4 15.d5 exd5 16.♖xg7 is dangerous for Black) 15.♔b1 ♖fc8 16.♕e3 g6, with an unclear position.

14...0-0 15.♗h6 ♘e8



16.exd5?!

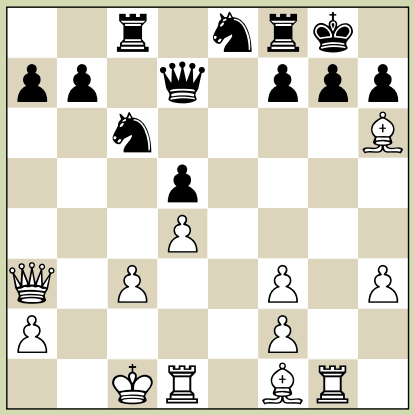
White is starting to lose the thread. Better was 16.♗d3 ♔h8 17.♗f4, although Black still has the easier play.

16...exd5 17.♕a3

My opponent had probably wanted to play 17.♖e1, with the idea of taking on e8, but Black has the simple 17...♕d6.

17...♖c8!

A useful developing move, which also prevents ♖e1. Black already has a nice advantage.

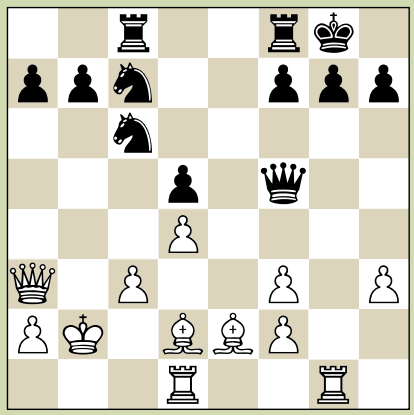


18.♔b2 As 18.♖e1? fails to 18...♘xd4 19.♖xe8 ♖fxe8 20.♗xg7 ♖e1+ 21.♔b2 ♖xf1 22.♖xf1 ♕b5+.

18...♕e6 18...♘e7! was stronger: 19.♗f4 (19.♗d3 is even worse: 19...♘g6 20.♗e3 ♘d6) 19...♘g6 20.♗g3 ♖c6, and the compromised position of the white king gives Black a sizeable advantage.

19.♗d2 ♕f5 20.♗e2 ♘c7

I wanted to place my knight on e6, from where it holds the entire position, and then start a queenside offensive with ...b5-b4.



21.♖g5?! 21.f4! was the only way to create some counterplay on the kingside and activate the bishops.

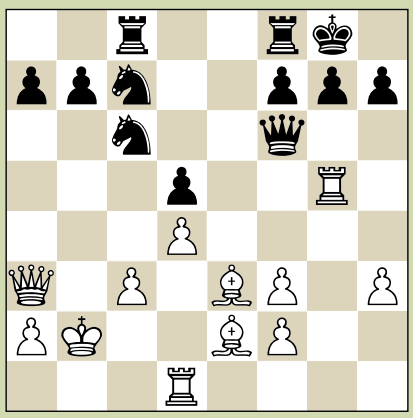
MACAULEY PETERSON CHES24.COM

As if to show his interest in their company, Ivan Saric was the only Challenger who came to watch the Masters during the round they played in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

Jan Timman

21...♕f6! Taking the pawn on h3 is not bad, but it's not human. The queen is much better placed on f6.

22.♗e3

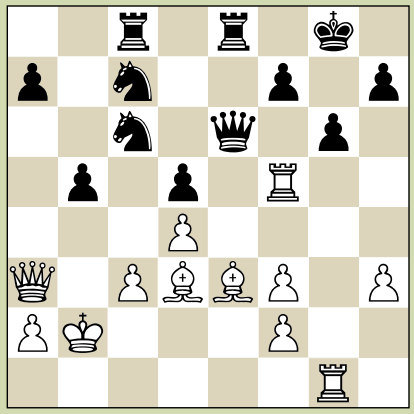


22...♖fe8

22...b5 may even be better, but I wanted to develop all my pieces before launching an attack.

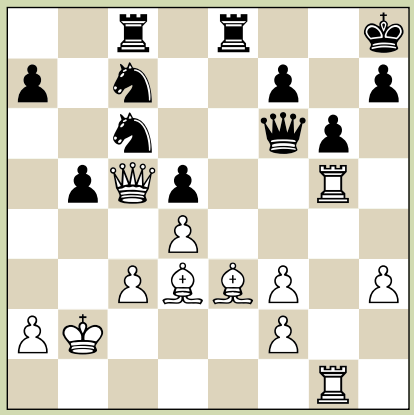
23.♖dg1 g6 24.♗d3 b5 25.♖f5 ♕e6

This move prevents ♕d6, as it was important to keep the white queen out of play.

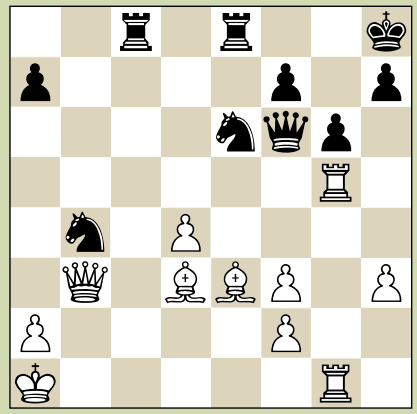


26.♕c5 ♔h8 27.♖fg5 ♕f6

Now the threat of ...♘e6 looks devastating.



28.♔a1 b4! 29.cxb4 ♘e6 30.♕xd5 ♘xb4 31.♕b3



31...♘xd4!

This is by far the strongest move to win.

32.♕b2 ♘dc2+ 33.♗xc2

33.♔b1 ♕xb2+ 34.♔xb2 ♘xd3+.

33...♘xc2+ 34.♔b1 ♖b8

White resigned. If he takes on b8, then, instead of taking the queen, Black delivers a nice mate: 35.♕xb8 ♘a3+! 36.♔c1 ♕c3+ 37.♔d1 ♕d3+ 38.♔e1 ♘c2 mate.

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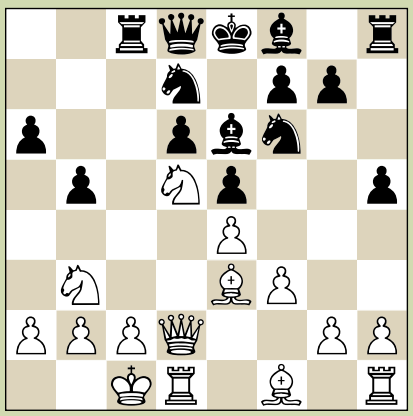
It was amazing to see how easily Saric brushed aside Wojtaszek in Round 9:

SI 14.11 – B90
Ivan Saric
Radoslaw Wojtaszek
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (9)

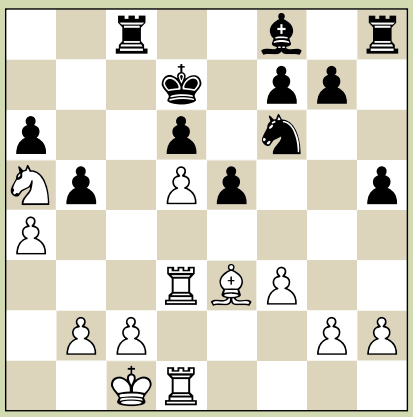
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 e5 7.♘b3 ♗e6 8.f3 ♘bd7 9.♕d2 b5 10.0-0-0 h5 11.♘d5 ♖c8

Black usually exchanges the knight as soon as it lands on d5, either against his own knight or against his bishop.



12.♕a5! This looks like an excellent plan. Without the queens White will be able to put pressure on the enemy queenside. **12...♘xd5 13.exd5 ♗f5 14.♗d3 ♗xd3** This swap only helps White, as the rook now takes up a very good position on d3. Stronger was 14...♕xa5 15.♘xa5 g6!, after which the white advantage remains within limits. **15.♖xd3 ♕xa5 16.♘xa5 ♘f6 17.♖hd1 ♔d7 18.a4!**

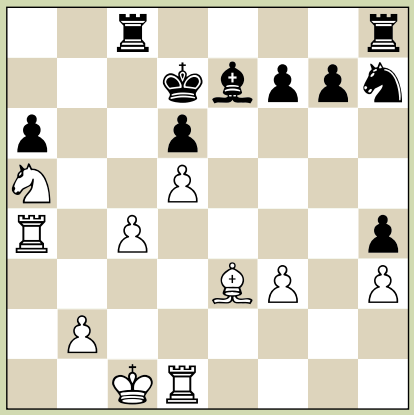
The consequence of White's play.



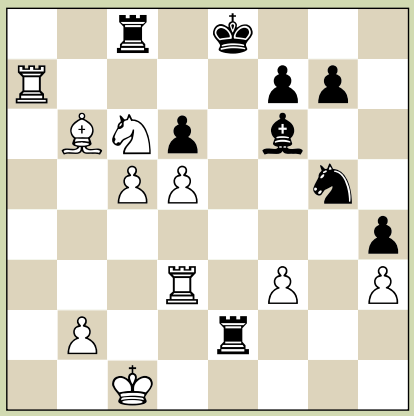
18...bxa4

Now things start moving fast. More tenacious was 18...♘e8, intending to cover the queenside pawns from c7.

19.♖a3 ♗e7 20.c4 h4 21.h3 e4 22.♖xa4 exf3 23.gxf3 ♘h7

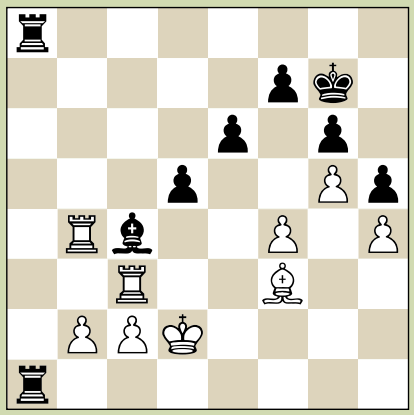


24.♘c6 ♗f6 25.♖xa6 ♖he8 26.♖d3 ♘g5 27.♗b6 ♖e2 28.♖a7+ ♔e8 29.c5



Black resigned.

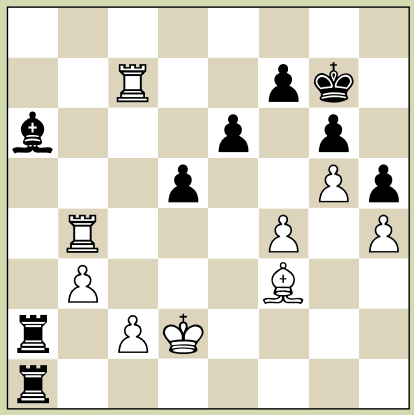
Once you have the wind in your sails, the points sometimes seem to fall into your lap.



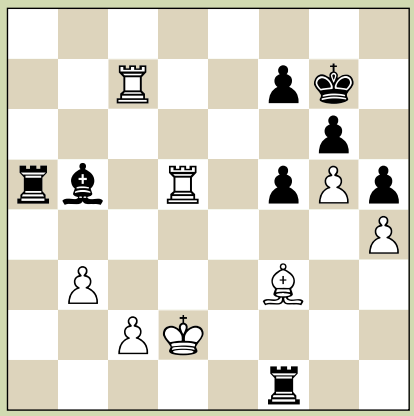
Ivan Saric-Yu Yangyi
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (12)
position after 33.♗f3

The game had been balanced from the early middlegame. Now Black has to watch out. Good is 33...♖8a7, to cover the seventh rank. But the young Chinese player played something else.

33...♖8a2? Attacking in an area where there is nothing to attack. **34.b3 ♗a6 35.♖c7!** And suddenly it's finished. Black has no defence against the threat of 36.f5.



35...♖a5 Just a stay of execution. 35...♖f1 36.f5! ♖xf3 37.f6+ was equally hopeless. **36.f5 exf5 37.♖d4** Now the d-pawn can no longer be covered. **37...♗b5 38.♖xd5 ♖f1**



39.♖d8 ♗a6 40.♗d5 ♖f2+ 41.♔c3
Black resigned.
With this win, Saric clinched tournament victory.

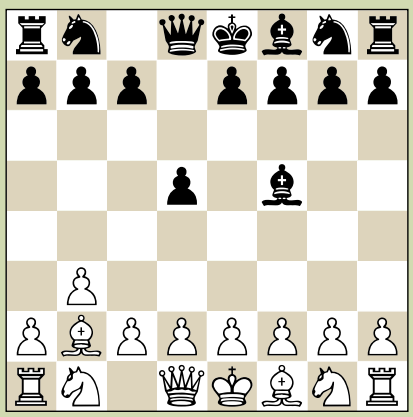
Wijk aan Zee Challengers 2014			cat. XIV
			TPR
1 Ivan Saric	IGM CRO 2637	10	2785
2 Jan Timman	IGM NED 2607	8½	2686
3 Baadur Jobava	IGM GEO 2710	8½	2679
4 Anna Muzychuk	IGM SLO 2566	8	2667
5 Dimitri Reinderman	IGM NED 2593	8	2665
6 Benjamin Bok	IM NED 2560	7	2609
7 Yu Yangyi	IGM CHN 2677	7	2600
8 Jan-Krzysztof Duda	IGM POL 2553	7	2610
9 Radoslaw Wojtaszek	IGM POL 2711	7	2597
10 Sabino Brunello	IGM ITA 2602	6	2548
11 Kayden Troff	IM USA 2457	4½	2478
12 Zhao Xue	IGM CHN 2567	4½	2470
13 Merijn van Delft	IM NED 2430	3	2379
14 Etienne Goudriaan	IM NED 2431	2	2294

Jan Timman

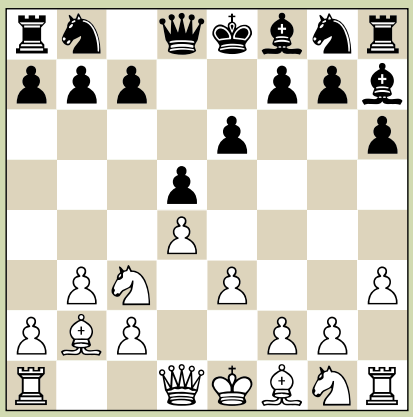
In the beginning, Jobava easily kept pace. He played his games with a striking ease, using very little time.

VO 8.10 – A01
Baadur Jobava
Yu Yangyi
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (8)

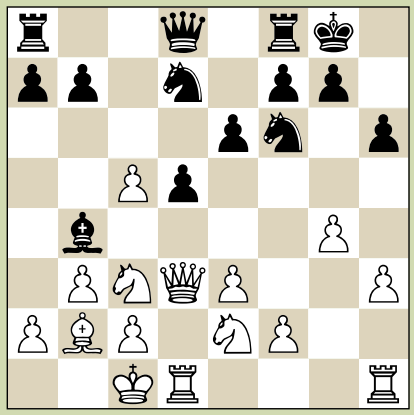
1.b3
Jobava had opened like this several times in the past year, both in classical and in rapid games. So this could not have been a surprise to his opponent.
1...d5 2.♗b2 ♗f5
One of the many systems for Black. He first takes his bishop outside the pawn chain, and then starts thinking about the deployment of his knights.



3.e3 e6 4.h3 h6 5.♘c3 ♗h7 6.d4
Remarkable. White closes his queen's bishop's long diagonal. He wants to take the other bishop to d3 and recapture with the queen after the swap.



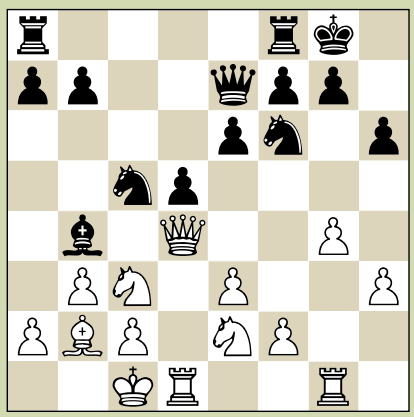
6...♘f6 7.♗d3 ♗xd3 8.♕xd3 ♘bd7 9.0-0-0 ♗b4 10.♘ge2 0-0 11.g4 c5 12.dxc5
White doesn't mind opening the long diagonal again.



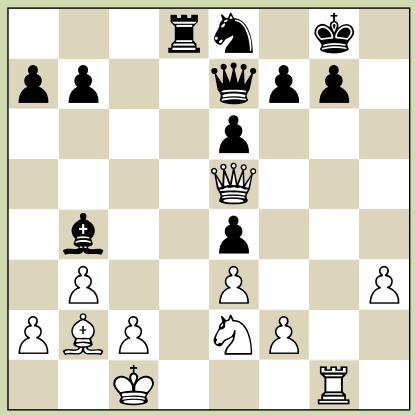
12...♕e7 It's a good idea in itself to defer the capture of the pawn, but then 12...♕c7 would have been more accurate. After 13.♖hg1 ♘e5 14.♕d4 ♘c6 White will be unable to prevent move repetition, as his queen cannot really go to f4 in view of the favourable endgame for Black.

> 'Everyone playing in Wijk aan Zee knew that Jobava had returned to his hotel at half past five in the morning.'

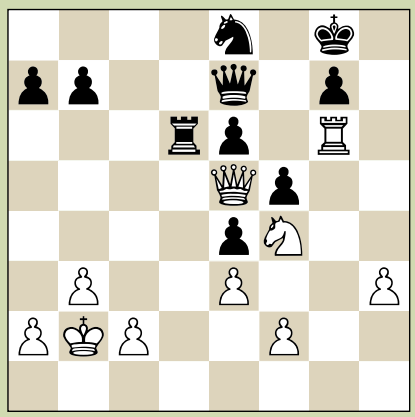
13.♖hg1 Now White has good attacking chances, although the situation is not yet alarming for Black.
13...♘xc5 14.♕d4



14...♘ce4? But this is a serious mistake, which causes Black insurmountable trouble on the long diagonal. He should have withdrawn his knight to d7.
15.♘xe4 dxe4 16.g5 hxg5 17.♕e5! Black must have overlooked this intermediate move.
17...♖fd8 18.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 19.♕xg5 ♘e8 20.♕e5
The queen triumphantly returns to its central outpost. White wins a pawn, after which his technical job is no longer difficult.



20...f5 21.♘f4 ♗a3 22.♖g6 ♗xb2+ 23.♔xb2 ♖d6

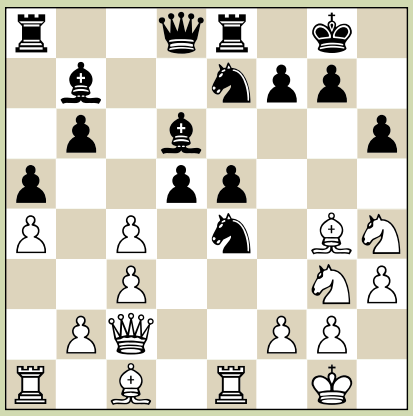


24.♖xe6 ♖xe6 25.♕xe6+ ♕f7 26.h4 ♕xe6 27.♘xe6 ♘f6 28.♔c3 ♘g4 29.♘d8 b6 30.♘c6 ♘xf2 31.♔d4 ♔f7 32.♘xa7 ♔e6 33.♘c8 ♘g4 34.♘xb6 ♘e5 35.h5
Black resigned.

After this game everything was still fine for the Georgian player. Almost everyone playing in Wijk aan Zee knew that Jobava had returned to his hotel at half past five in the morning of the day of the game after a night on the town in Amsterdam. I was glad to hear this, because I am sometimes afraid that the chess world is in danger of smothering in its own respectability.

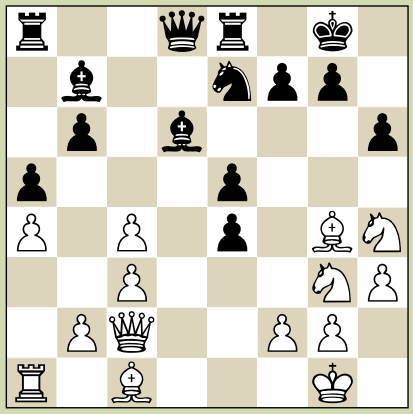
Baadur Jobava: always in search of adventure.

In the following fragment, Jobava really went for broke.

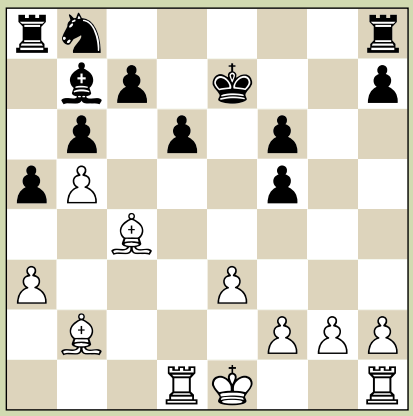


Jobava-Bok
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (10)
position after 16...♘xe4

White can calmly continue with 17.♘xe4 dxe4 18.♗e3 here, with good play. What grandmaster would not have done this? But Jobava went in search of adventure.
17.♖xe4 dxe4

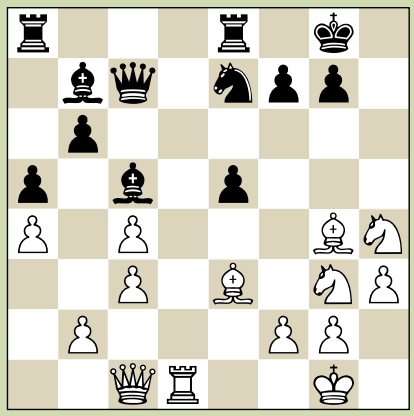


18.♗xh6 Unbelievable. White sacrifices a rook without there being any mate in the offing. Bok thought for a long time, eventually deciding not to take the bishop. This reminded me of a 40-year-old anecdote about Bent Larsen and Ulf Andersson. In a game Gligoric-Andersson, Manila 1974, the following position had arisen:

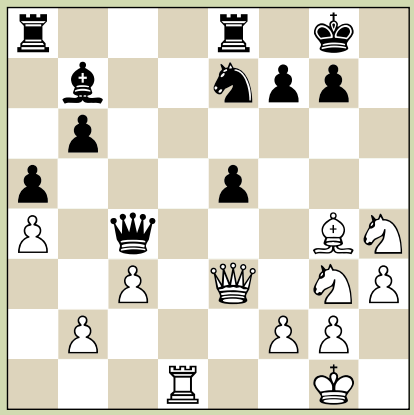


Gligoric-Andersson
Manila 1974
position after 16... d6

Gligoric now made the amazing exchange sacrifice 17.♖d5!?, whereupon Andersson, himself a great lover of positional exchange sacrifices, sank into deep thought. He eventually decided to go for 17...♘d7, after which White took on f5 and won the game. But there was nothing against taking the rook on d5, since this would yield Black a good position. All of which inspired Larsen to say afterwards: 'Ulf, next time you should take the rook first and only then start thinking.' Benjamin Bok is in need of the same advice: take the bishop first and only then start thinking.
The variations after 18...gxh6 are not even that complicated in themselves. It is important for Black to meet 19.♖d1 with 19...♘c8!, e.g. 20.♘hf5 ♕f6 21.♘xe4 ♗xe4 22.♕xe4 ♖b8, and White does have beautiful play on the light squares, but he is a rook down.
18...♗c5 19.♖d1 ♕c7 20.♕c1 e3 21.♗xe3



21...♗xe3 Playing into White's hands. After 21...♖ad8 the position would have been equal. **22.♕xe3 ♕xc4**
Now it's getting from bad to worse. 22...♖ad8 was still possible.



23.♘h5! Winning. The black queen is kept away from f4, after which the white attack becomes an avalanche.
23...♕e4 24.♕g5 ♘g6 25.♔h2 ♗c8 26.f3 ♕c2 27.♖d6 ♗xg4 28.hxg4 ♔h7 29.♘xg6 fxg6 30.♘f6+ gxf6 31.♖d7+ ♔g8 32.♕xf6 Black resigned.

Towards the end of the tournament, Jobava fell off a bit; no wonder after all those nocturnal adventures.

My own tournament got off to a rather laborious start. During my match against Karpov in Groningen I had broken my hand in an awkward tumble. As a result, my arm was encased

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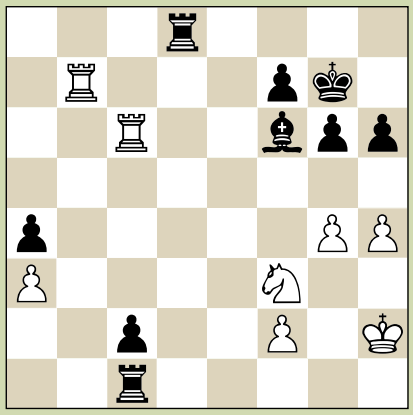
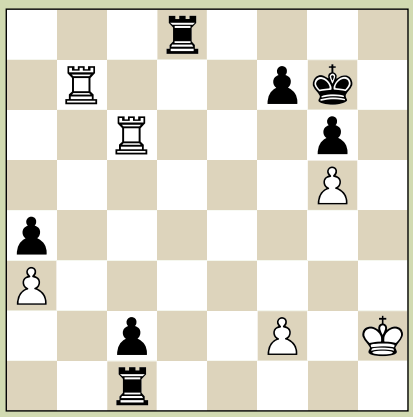
in plaster, which seriously hampered my concentration. I took until Round 4 to get somewhat used to it. But I was not always sufficiently alert after four hours of play. This is what happened in Round 5.

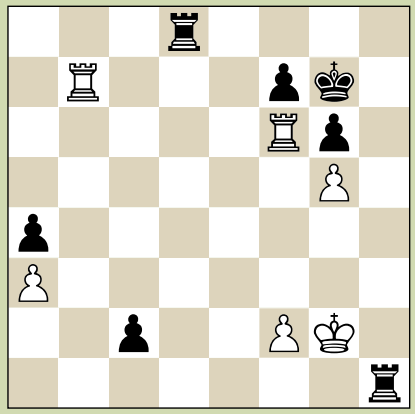


Bok-Timman
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (5)
position after 39...♖d8

A pre-time-control move. Black has an extra pawn that should guarantee him victory. 40.♖cc7 is met by the decisive 40...♖b1!, which is why Bok tried: **40.g5 hxg5 41.♘xg5** This surprised me, because I thought the double rook ending would be a simple win. I had planned to meet 41.hxg5 with 41...♗a1. **41...♗xg5 42.hxg5**



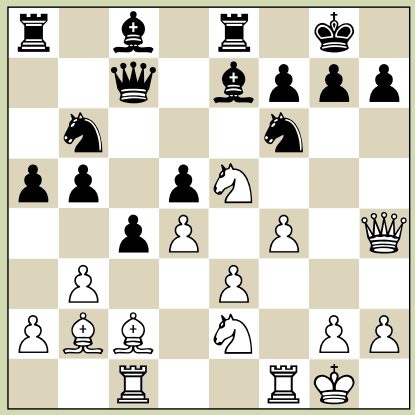
42...♖d5? After a long think I concluded that this move would lead to a forced win. But I had overlooked a very simple snag. The correct way was 42...♖d2!, and then meeting 43.♔g2 with 43...♖d5. Black will win the g-pawn with check. But the problem seemed to be 43.♖f6, when White threatens to take on f7 in two ways. If I had been fitter, I would undoubtedly have found the study-like win: 43...♖h1+ 44.♔g2 ♖d8!, and both threats of perpetual check have been prevented and the queening c-pawn will decide.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

43.♖b2 This obvious move came as a shock: with the black bishop still on the board, White had to prevent the c-pawn from queening by doubling his rooks on the c-file, but now he has this extra possibility. After 43.♖bc7 I had planned 43...♖f5!, with the point that after 44.♖xc2 ♖xf2+! 45.♖xf2 ♖xc7 46.♖f4 ♖c2+ 47.♔h1 (the only move) 47...♖c5 48.♖g4 ♔f8 White will eventually be unable to prevent having to swap his g-pawn for the black a-pawn. After that, the two connected passed pawns will decide.
But after the text this variation has become moot, which makes the win problematic. How I still managed, eventually, to get a winning position you can see in Afek's column.

On the second rest day the plaster was removed, and I promptly won an excellent game against Duda, the young Polish star. In Round 10, I played my most spectacular game in years.



Goudriaan-Timman
Wijk aan Zee 2014 (10)
position after 17...♗e7

A well-known picture. In the Rubinstein Variation of the Nimzo-Indian, White is gunning for the kingside, while Black has a powerful majority on the queenside. White now has various ways to organize his attack.

18.f5

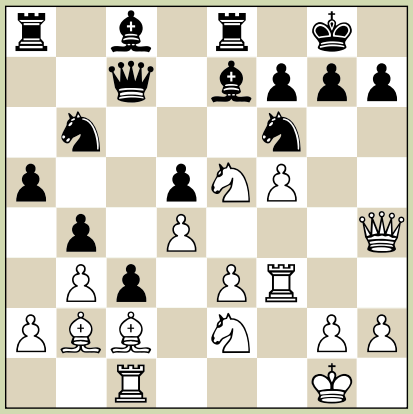
This was a slight surprise, but the advance is certainly not bad. It's true that it decreases the attacking potential of the queen's bishop, but to balance this, White gains space on the kingside. The alternative was 18.g4 ♘e4 19.g5, when Black's best reply is 19...♗f5, with chances on both sides.

18...b4

18...♘bd7, to start a principled fight for the foothold on e5, may have been better, although this would have necessitated some very sharp calculating. It is important that the line 19.♖f3 ♗d6 20.♖g3 ♘xe5 21.dxe5 ♗xe5 22.♕g5 ♘e4! 23.♗xe4 ♗xb2! will work in Black's advantage.

19.♖f3 This move means that White is, in fact, aiming for a draw.

19...c3

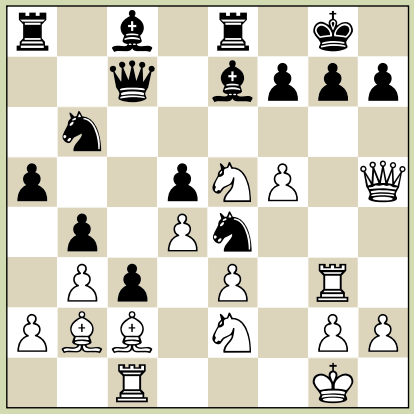


20.♖g3

The point of the previous move. After 20...cxb2 21.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 22.♕g5+ ♔f8 23.♕h6+ it is perpetual check.

20...♘e4 A winning attempt.

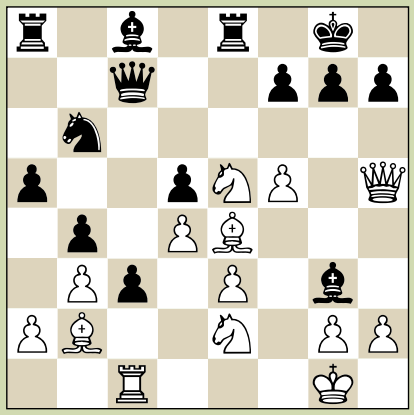
21.♕h5 Here I thought for a long time. Black has no time to take the white bishop or rook, since he must cover his f-pawn. All kinds of moves with the king's bishop present themselves, but I didn't like most of them. It would be dangerous to underestimate the white attack. In the end I found the amazing solution to my positional problem.



21...♗h4!!

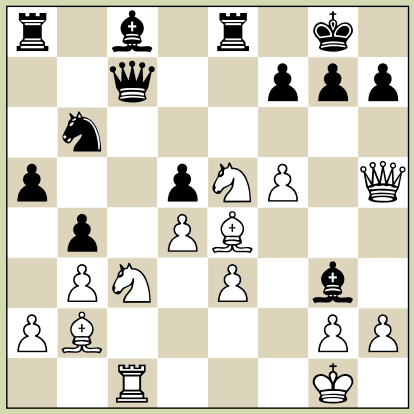
Not only covering the f-pawn, but also attacking the rook. Other moves would really have given White a winning attack.

22.♗xe4 ♗xg3



23.f6

Who would not have played this? Black is coming under increasing pressure, and mating turns are making themselves felt. Yet the computer finds 23.♘xc3 more accurate. Now there are two spectacular possibilities:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 23...♗xe5 24.♘xd5 ♗xh2+ 25.♕xh2 ♕xh2+ 26.♔xh2, and White's strong central pawns give him just enough compensation for the exchange;

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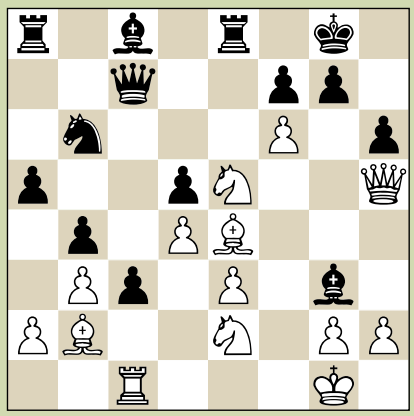
Jan Timman refused to be bothered too much by a broken hand.

B) 23...bxc3 24.f6! (now this works!) 24...h6 25.♘xf7! ♗xh2+ 26.♔h1 ♖xe4 27.♘xh6+! gxh6 28.♕g6+ ♔h8 29.♕xh6+, with perpetual check.

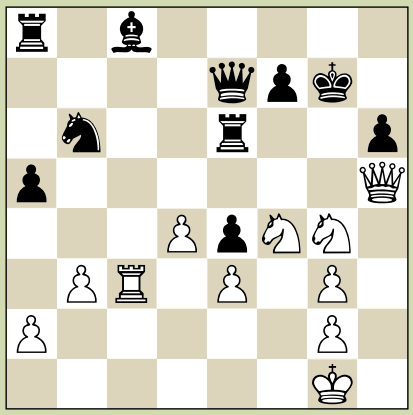
23...h6! Incredible. With the board burning and several pieces hanging, Black plays a quiet defensive move. But it was absolutely necessary, because Black needed not only to parry the mating threat on h7 but also to keep the white queen away from square g5.



24.♘xg3 Again the most obvious continuation. White wants to involve

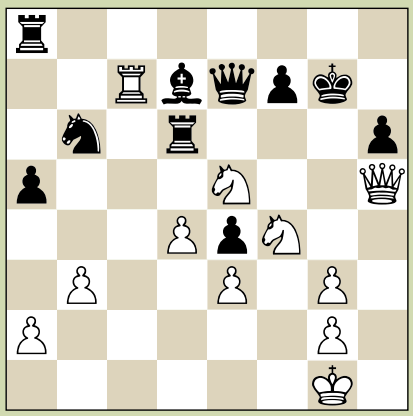
Jan Timman

his knight in the attack. Yet 24.hxg3, to keep the sacrifice on c3 in the position, would have been better, e.g. 24...dxe4 25.♗xc3 bxc3 26.♖xc3 ♕b7 27.fxg7 ♖e6 28.♘g4 ♔xg7 29.♘f4 ♕e7,



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

and now White injects new life into his attack with 30.♖c7!. Black cannot really take the rook. A possible continuation is: 30...♗d7 31.♘e5 ♖d6

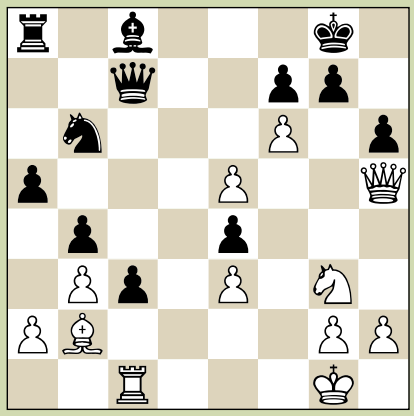


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

32.♖b7! ♖f8 33.♖xb6 ♖xb6 34.♘d5 ♕g5 35.♕xg5+ hxg5 36.♘xb6, and White should be able to hold the endgame.

24...♖xe5! A strong exchange sacrifice, averting the white attack.

25.dxe5 dxe4

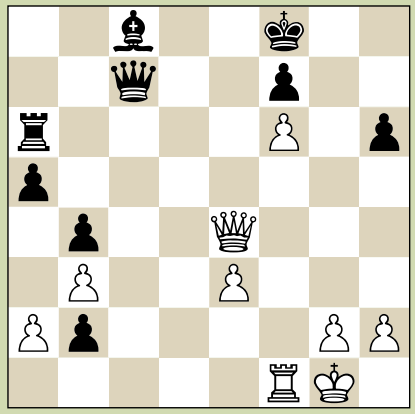


26.♖f1 White is burning all his bridges, but there were no good alternatives. After 26.fxg7 Black imperturbably plays 26...♔xg7, when the computer indicates 27.♗a1. But I think that very few white players would opt for burying their bishop alive in this fashion.

26...cxb2 27.fxg7 ♔xg7 28.♕h4 ♘d5 29.♘h5+ ♔f8 30.♘f6 ♘xf6 31.exf6 ♖a6!

The rook is getting involved in the defence. 32.♕xh6+ ♔e8 33.♖d1 will now be met by 33...♖d6, and the black king is completely safe.

32.♕xe4



32...♗e6

After deploying my queen's rook, I thought it would be a good idea to complete my development. But Black had an elegant win here: 32...♖xf6 33.♖xf6 ♕e7! 34.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 35.♖f1 ♗f5, and wins.

33.♖d1 ♔e8 34.♕b1 ♕e5 35.♕h7 ♖d6 36.♖xd6 ♕xe3+ 37.♔f1 ♕f4+ White resigned.

This victory took me to within half a point of the leaders. But at the age of 62, there are limits to your energy. In Round 11, I blundered deep into the endgame against Jobava, allowing him to escape with a draw. But I could console myself with the thought that even a win would not have yielded me tournament victory, as Saric also continued to score and fully deserved his promotion to next year's Masters. ■

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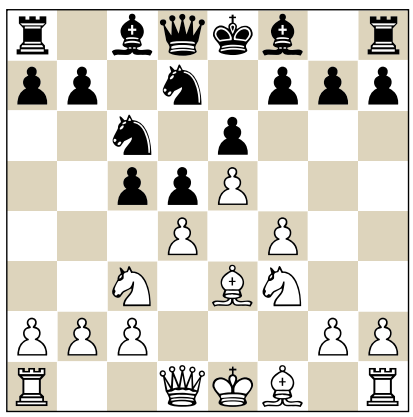
Sadler on Books

Quality bombardment

For the past few months, I've been feeling extremely guilty. I've been bombarded with books from Quality Chess, but so far I haven't reviewed a single one of them – all the more shameful because they are producing some very classy books at the moment. I was originally hoping to review some of Aagaard's excellent Grandmaster Preparation series – *Strategic Play* and *Attack and Defence* – but I promised myself I would first work through all the exercises before doing so... and that's taking quite a bit of effort! So for now I've taken the slightly easier option of reviewing a recent opening book by Aagaard & Ntirlis and the latest instalment of Judit Polgar's career retrospective.

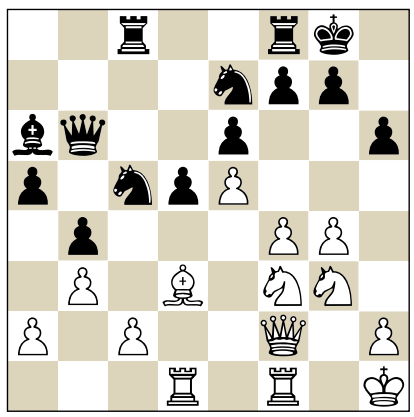
Someone must love the French at Quality Chess because they are also publishing a 3-volume survey by the noted French expert Emmanuel Berg. I took a quick look at the second volume on the Winawer, and it seemed pretty awesome. ***Playing the French*** by Aagaard & Ntirlis is a repertoire book that focuses on the following lines:
Against the Tarrasch: 3.♘d2 c5
Against the Advance: 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♗d7
Against 3.♘c3: 3...♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3 a6 while against 4.♗g5 we get two choices: 4...♗e7 and 4...♗b4.

These two authors collaborated earlier on the fantastic *The Tarrasch Defence*. I thought I knew a fair amount about the Tarrasch, but after reading this book, I was amazed/aghast at how much I didn't know! This book doesn't quite reach the level of their previous effort but it's still an excellent source of inspiration for any French players out there. First of all, the unreservedly positive stuff. Quite unusually, the authors explain their choice of recommendations and their reasons for rejecting other possibilities in considerable depth. Take the chapters on the Steinitz Variation: **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3**



The authors spend six pages examining the moves 7...♕b6, 7...cxd4 and 7...♗e7 before concentrating on their choice of 7...a6. This context is a great help in making sense of the initial phase of an opening. When you read that 7...♕b6 is well met by 8.♘a4, then you understand better why 8.a4 is not the best reaction to 7...a6 (8...♕b6 can't be met by 9.♘a4!).

I also grew to appreciate the 'Diagram Preview' at the start of each chapter. This is a refinement of the feature introduced in *The Tarrasch Defence*. In that book, each chapter started with a variation index and a few diagrams of the TNs in the coming chapter. Here, the authors replace those diagrams with seven or eight key positions from the coming chapter, and they ask a question about each of them. When you first start reading the book, then the diagrams feel like too much work to be honest: it's complex stuff and relies on knowledge that you haven't seen yet. However, it works very well as quick revision when reading through a chapter for the second time. An example from one of the later chapters on the Steinitz Variation: **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♗e3 a6 8.♕d2 b5 9.dxc5 ♗xc5 10.♗xc5 ♘xc5 11.♕f2 ♕b6 12.♗d3 b4 13.♘e2 a5 14.0-0 ♗a6 15.b3 h6 16.♖ad1 0-0 17.g4 ♖ac8 18.♘g3 ♘e7 19.♔h1**



How can Black successfully defend against the kingside attack?

Sadler on Books

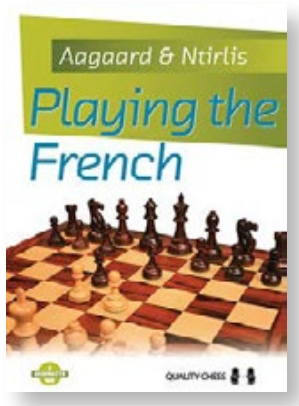
The authors' solution is: **19...♕b7 20.♗xa6 ♕xa6 21.f5 ♘e4** with the possible follow-up **22.♘xe4 dxe4 23.f6 exf3 24.fxe7 ♖fe8 25.♕xf3 ♖xe7** with good chances for Black.

I think it was Jan Timman who once said that there are three levels of grandmaster preparation:

The first level is that of the normal grandmaster who finds a new idea, and is satisfied to play it after some light analysis (noticing a few tactical tricks etc...).

The second level is that of the 'super-grandmaster', who analyses lines in considerable depth but leaves some interesting looking lines as unclear.

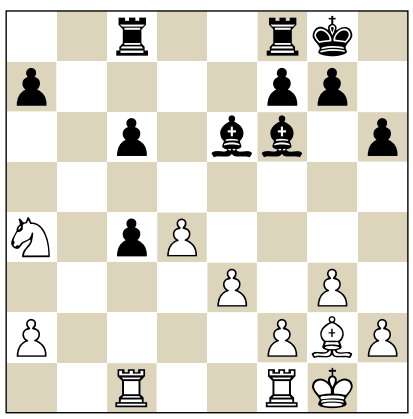
And then you have the Kasparov level of preparation which crunches



Playing the French
A Complete Repertoire for Black based on 3.Nc3 Nf6 and 3.Nd2 c5
by Jacob Aagaard & Nikolaos Ntirlis
Quality Chess 2013

through all those unclear evaluations until he resolves them to a definite evaluation.

The Tarrasch Defence at times reached the Kasparov level. 10 pages' original analysis on the position below is not your standard opening book fare!

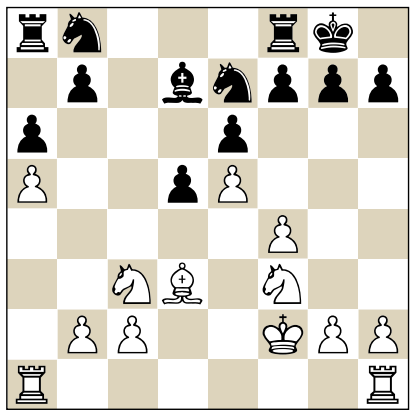


My feeling was that *Playing the French* spent much more time at the normal grandmaster level. Lots of interesting ideas, but I had quite a few moments where I thought 'Hmm...not sure about that conclusion. Needs a bit more work...' Please understand however that this is a qualified criticism! The book is chock-a-block full of new ideas so it's a great starting point for further investigation. Maybe I can best give a couple of examples. First of all, Aagaard and Ntirlis make a courageous attempt to revive the Classical Variation, an occasional favourite of Nigel Short:

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.e5 ♘fd7

One of their lines goes as follows:

6.♗xe7 ♕xe7 7.f4 a6 8.♘f3 ♘b6 9.♕d2 ♗d7 10.a4 c5 11.a5 ♘c8 12.dxc5 ♕xc5 13.♗d3 ♘e7 14.♕f2 ♕xf2+ 15.♔xf2 0-0



and now the authors give: **16.♖he1 ♖c8!** intending to drop the bishop back to e8 and bring the queen's knight to d7 where it will cover the hole on b6. **17.♖ed1 ♗e8 18.g4 ♘ec6 19.♘a4 ♘d7**

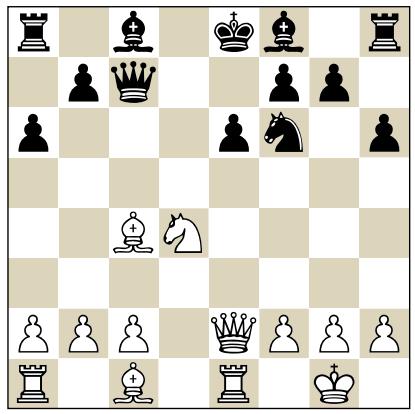
Black covers the b6-square and attacks the a5-pawn. He is in no way worse.

I quite like Black's regrouping of his pieces, so full marks for this new plan, but the variation that's given is the sort of thing that always makes me a little grouchy. 16.♖he1 and then 17.♖ed1, 18.g4 playing on the kingside and then 19.♘a4 on the queenside, when after 19...♘d7 the knight will probably have to retreat back to c3. It's a bit much to conclude that Black is OK after move 15 on the basis of this variation.

If White were to start with **16.♖hd1 ♖c8** and then just play some normal-looking moves like **17.g4 ♗e8 18.♘e2 ♘d7 19.c3 ♘c5 20.♗c2** then I think that Black still has to prove equality. White has the very simple plan of just expanding on the kingside whereas I'm not too sure what Black is doing.

Another variation that got me very interested was the recommendation of a virtually untested new possibility in the French Tarrasch:

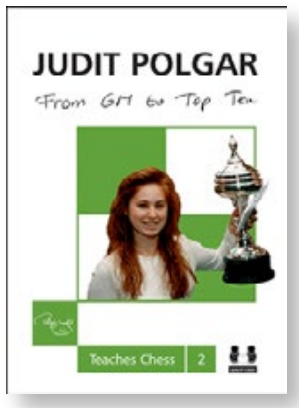
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.exd5 ♕xd5 5.♘gf3 cxd4 6.♗c4 ♕d6 7.0-0 ♘f6 8.♘b3 ♘c6 9.♘bxd4 ♘xd4 10.♘xd4 a6 11.♖e1 ♕c7 12.♕e2 and now **12...h6**



This has only been played once before it seems, in a 2011 correspondence game. As a British player and Basman fan, you can imagine how much I like this type of idea! Again, Aagaard and Ntirlis do a great job of explaining why previously tried options such as 12...♗d6 and 12...♗c5 don't quite do the job for Black. They then provide a couple of pages of analysis of 12...h6, but I wasn't super-enthusiastic about that analysis. The conclusion that 13.h3 was the best try for White also didn't quite ring true. White's pieces are well-placed: White might not be winning, but he must be able to generate more danger than 13.h3. Again, it's a criticism only relative to the level displayed in *The Tarrasch Defence*. I still think it's fantastic to come across this type of idea in a book. But I decided that it would be fun to try and refute it, so I spent some precious hours having a crack. This was what I found, first of all by myself, and then later checked by the silicon monster.

That is definitely the best way to work by the way. I'm running Houdini on some decent hardware (a quad-core i7 CPU) but he's not omnipotent! You get a much better quality of analysis by having a go yourself first for an hour or two and only then bringing in Houdini to check things. At the very least, you're more likely to highlight lines that are maybe no more than a draw objectively, but that a human might find difficult to defend in a practical situation. If Houdini assesses such a line pessimistically, then he's likely to just ignore it.

Black is looking to develop his dark-squared bishop on the next move, normally either to c5 or to d6. Once this happens, White gains the possibility

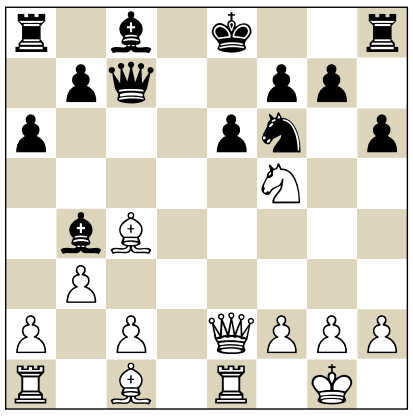


From GM to Top Ten
Judit Polgar Teaches Chess 2
by Judit Polgar
Quality Chess, 2013

of ♘f5, exploiting the pin on the e-file to bring his knight into an attacking position. So White is looking for a useful move in this attacking structure. I focused on 2 moves: 13.b3 (analysed by Aagaard & Ntirlis) and 13.♗d2.

13.b3 ♗b4 The authors' recommendation to disrupt White's natural development. Only 14.♗d2 was considered as a possibility, but White has a much more dangerous option.

14.♘f5

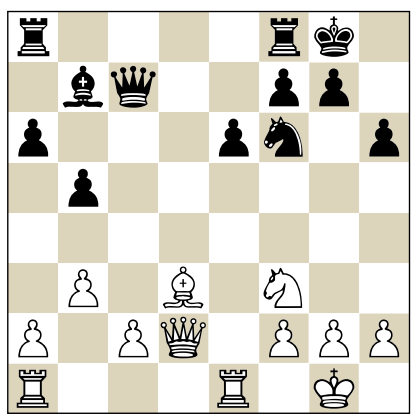


> 'And then you have the Kasparov level of preparation which crunches through all those unclear evaluations until he resolves them to a definite evaluation.'

Not a move you look at further when analysing with Houdini: he stays at a severe minus for quite some time.

14.♗b5+ ♔f8 doesn't really achieve anything.

14.♗d2 ♗xd2 15.♕xd2 0-0 16.♘f3 b5 17.♗d3 ♗b7 with equality was Aagaard & Ntirlis' line.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

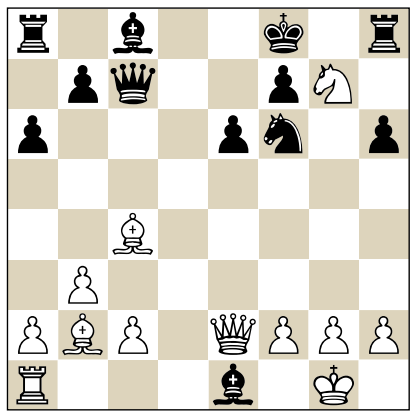
14...♗xe1

14...0-0 15.♘xh6+ gxh6 16.♗xh6 ♗xe1 17.♖xe1 is another very unclear attacking possibility in which Houdini is initially very optimistic for Black but gradually revises his opinion. However, as 14...♗xe1 seems to draw, it's not that important for our discussion. 14...♔f8 15.c3 is the cunning idea!

15.♘xg7+

15.♗a3 was one hope, but I soon saw that it is dashed by 15...♗xf2+ 16.♕xf2 (16.♔h1 ♗c5 is a great round-trip for the bishop!) 16...exf5 17.♖e1+ ♘e4.

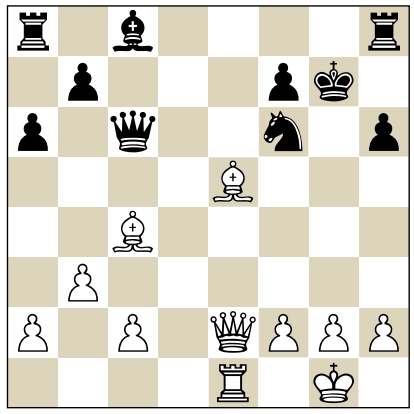
15...♔f8 16.♗b2 The key idea. 16.♕xe1 ♔xg7 17.♗b2 is well met by 17...b5 18.♗d3 ♗b7 and White just can't get close to the Black king: 19.♕b4 e5 20.♖e1 ♖he8.



16...♗xf2+

Not difficult to spot if you've already seen 15.♗a3 ♗xf2+! I was hoping Houdini would find more than the draw I found, but it was not to be...

16...♔xg7 17.♖xe1 was the big idea. 17...e5 (17...♕a5 is the reason Houdini doesn't want to consider this line for a long time, but you show him 18.♗e5 and he starts to like White an awful lot! That pin will cost a knight eventually!) 18.♗xe5 ♕c6 was the best defence I thought, but I was extremely optimistic about White's chances.



Houdini finished it off for me: 19.♕h5 ♗e6 20.♗xf6+ ♔xf6 21.♕e5+ ♔e7 22.♗xe6 fxe6 23.♕g7+ ♔d6 24.♖d1+ ♔c5 25.♕d4+ with mate in 4.

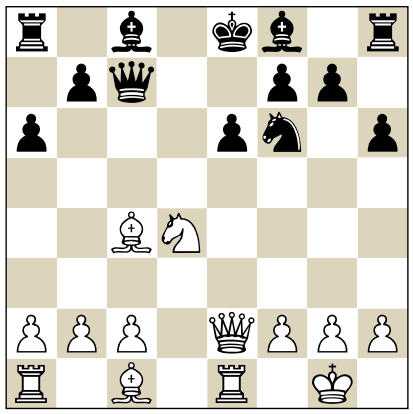
17.♕xf2 ♘g4 18.♕h4 ♕b6+

18...♕c5+ is also fine, but this move carefully keeps control of the d8- square!

Sadler on Books

19.♔h1 19.♔f1 e5. **19...♘f2+ 20.♔g1 ♘g4+** With a draw. 20...♘d1+ 21.♗d4.

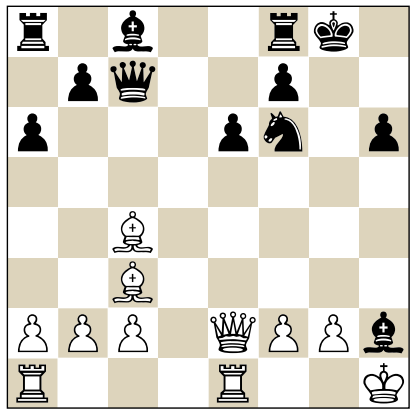
Hmm... That doesn't quite work then! OK, plan B!



13.♗d2 I had very high hopes for this move. It looked like I had all the advantages of 13.b3 and none of the disadvantages. However, Black's position is pretty resilient.

13...♗c5

13...♗d6 14.♘f5 (White cannot be afraid to lose his h2-pawn!) 14...♗xh2+ 15.♔h1 0-0 16.♘xh6+ gxh6 17.♗c3.



The idea. I was sure this was going to be very awkward for Black, but Houdini didn't get too worried: 17...♘h7 18.♗d3 ♗f4 19.♕g4+ ♗g5 20.♗e5 ♕e7 21.f4 f6 22.♗c3 e5 23.♕g3 ♗e6 24.fxg5 ♘xg5. Houdini assesses this as equal, but I'm rather more partial to Black than to White.

14.♘f5 14.♗c3 0-0 – this is less harmonious for White than the similar variation with b3 &♗b2.

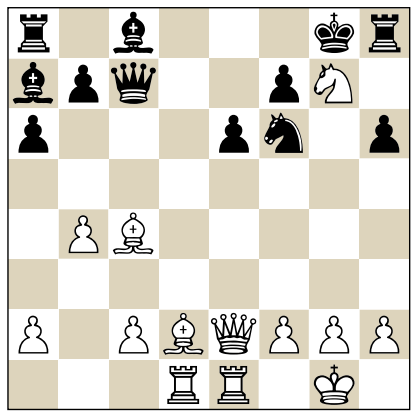
14...♔f8 The standard reaction for Black.

15.b4 Feels so right, making use of the bishop on d2 to push away the dark-squared bishop from the defence of the kingside dark-squares.

15...♗a7 16.♖ad1

My big concept! Houdini however was unmoved.

16...♔g8 16...exf5 17.♗f4 wins. **17.♘xg7** Decisive, I thought.



17...♗b8

Houdini. 17...♔xg7 18.♗c3 looked

Travel organizer:

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Fax: +39 0833 202539
e mail: centroprenotazioni@attiliocaroli.it
web site: www.attiliocaroli.it

Event organizer:

Chess Projects ASD
20149 Milano Via Marghera, 47
info@chesspro.it - www.chesspro.it
www.3salentochessopen2014.it
Mobile +39 335 6948385 - Tel. 02 84934382

Tournament: Open A, Open B, Rapid, Blitz,
Open A: players ELO FIDE rating >= 1800
Open B: players con ELO FIDE rating from 0 to < = 2000
Prize fund: € 5.600,00
Invitations: 10 titled players GM, WGM, IM, WIM
Evening open chess lectures managed by GM, WGM, IM, WIM
Football and tennis matches, poker "texas hold'em" night tournaments, daily sightseeing of most entertaining and historical Salento sites, Gallipoli, Otranto, Lecce, S. Maria di Leuca
Accomodation at Ecoresort Le Sirené by full board prizes for night/person: € 65

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‘Judit does a great job of explaining the ideas behind the moves and selecting only the most essential lines.’

awesome to me. Houdini agrees: he thinks White is just winning after 18...♕f4 19.♗e5 ♕f5 20.♖d3 ♗b8 21.♗xb8 ♖xb8 22.♖g3+ ♔f8 23.♖f3 ♕g5 24.h4 ♕xh4 25.♕e5. So handy having those monsters to help you with these sorts of lines!

18.g3 ♔xg7 Curses and damnations! Black is winning!

19.♗c3 e5

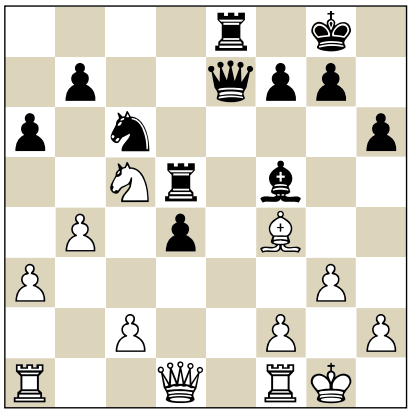
The point of ...♗b8! White doesn’t have any way to continue his attack.

So my efforts to refute this idea came to nothing, so well done Aagaard and Ntirlis. However, I think you understand my point: great source of inspiration, but check the new ideas carefully – there’s some dangerous stuff in there!

After that hard work, I was glad to be able to relax with the second volume of Judit’s *Judit Polgar teaches Chess* trilogy: *From GM to Top Ten*. I have nothing but praise and admiration for this book. Great games and superb annotations! Due to the complexity of her games you might expect the book to be filled with reams of variations, but Judit does a great job of explaining the ideas behind the moves and selecting only the most essential lines.

One of the most interesting chapters is the one entitled ‘Positional Sacrifices’, funnily enough illustrated by a photo of Judit in her wedding dress! In all the games in this chapter, I had a ‘Huh? What? Really!?’ reaction, which is usually a sign you’re about to learn something new. We’ll just take a look at her game against Malisauskas from Biel 1993.

Vidmantas Malisauskas
Judit Polgar
Biel Interzonal 1993

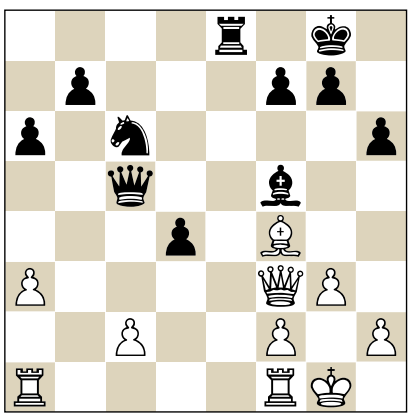


23.♕f3

‘White had played the opening modestly and I managed to accumulate some positional advantages. My development is better, the d4 pawn secures a space advantage, and the presence of opposite-coloured bishops combined with White’s weakened king position offers me attacking chances. At the moment though I have some concrete problems. White’s last move, 23.♕f3, aims to compensate for the aspects above by the hyper-activity of part of his army. The piece that annoyed me most was his knight, so I needed only 2 minutes to make my decision.’

Quite incredible decision-making! I would have agonised for ages before doing that!

23...♖xc5 24.bxc5 ♕xc5



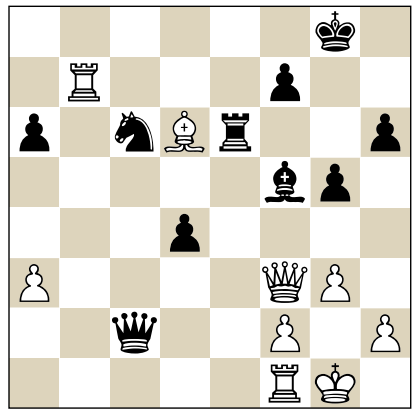
25.♖ab1

‘The counterplay generated by this move is too slow. White should have exchanged one rook in order to ease his defence. True, after 25.♖fe1 ♖xe1+ 26.♖xe1 ♕xc2 I would retain my positional advantage at virtually no risk.

25...♗e4 26.♕g4 ♗f5 27.♕f3 g5

‘Finally choosing the right path; strongly restricted by my pawns the white bishop has problems finding a favourable diagonal.’

28.♗d6 ♕xc2 29.♖xb7 ♖e6



‘Continuing to question the bishop’s lack of stability as if asking it to make up its mind regarding which diagonal it prefers. At this point my opponent seems to have understood that he faced a crucial decision as he invested 8 of his remaining 11 minutes on searching for a solution.’

30.♗b4 ‘He failed to find the right idea though!’ 30.g4 ♗g6 31.♗g3 ‘True, after 31...♕c3 I would still be happy to play with Black.’

30...a5

30...♘e5 ‘was the most precise continuation with a devastating attack on the light squares’. 31.♕d1 ♕c8 ‘Gaining a decisive tempo for the attack’. 32.♖e7 ♖xe7 33.♗xe7 ♕b7 ‘Attacking the bishop and creating decisive threats around the king’.

31.g4 ♗g6 32.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 33.♗xe1 ♔g7 34.♖c7 ♘e5 35.♕b7 ♕d1 0-1

A really nice game that went straight into my positional archive: a great example of a positional exchange sacrifice and the attacking power of opposite coloured-bishops. In summary, a fantastic book, don’t miss it! ■

Ivan Saric

CURRENT ELO: 2661
DATE OF BIRTH: August 17, 1990
PLACE OF BIRTH: Split, Croatia
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Omis, Croatia

What is your favourite colour?
Blue.

What kind of food makes you happy?
A good steak, fresh fish and all home-made food, especially *prosciutto*.

And what drink?
Wine, mostly dry red.

Who is your favourite author?
The last non-chess book I read more than seven years ago, so I can't say.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
La vita è bella (Life is beautiful).

What is your favourite TV series?
Seinfeld, *How I met your mother*.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Edward Norton, Christian Bale, Leslie Nielsen.

And a favourite actress?
Hilary Swank.

What music do you like listening to?
Every type.

Do you have a favourite artist?
Salvador Dali.

What was your best result ever?
Winning the U18 World Championship and the Tata Steel Challengers.

What was the best game you ever played?
A couple of games were almost perfect, but the one against Navara at the 2011 European Championship in Aix-les-Bains was the most interesting (though not completely correct), with two exchange sacrifices.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Bobby Fischer. He was way ahead of his time.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
In my young days when I was still 2200, I liked Kotov's *Think Like a Grandmaster*. I've read it more than once.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
Kasparov-Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Chess players are very different people, so I can't generalize.

Do they have typical shortcomings?
Same as the previous question, but maybe a difference is that they put too much trust in computers.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
Again myself.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Three people that I already know.

Where is your favourite place in the world?
Much more important is with whom, but I would choose the Croatian islands.

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
You should play the King's Indian.

Is there something you would love to learn?
To play endgames and to pilot small planes.

What is your greatest fear?
That my health will get worse.

What would you save from your house if it were on fire?
The laptop with analysis inside.

How do you relax?
Every time I'm with my daughter and my wife.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
That all tournaments must be played by the KO system (instead of the Swiss system).

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
Zero tolerance. In the whole history of chess (and also sport) there hasn't been such a stupid rule. It puts huge pressure on the players before the game. This was the easiest question.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 World Champion?
Everyone says from China, but I will try Azerbaijan.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
Yes, because if you feel bored, you can always think about chess.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
'If you don't win, it's not a great tragedy – the worst thing that can happen is that you lose a game.' – Bobby Fischer.

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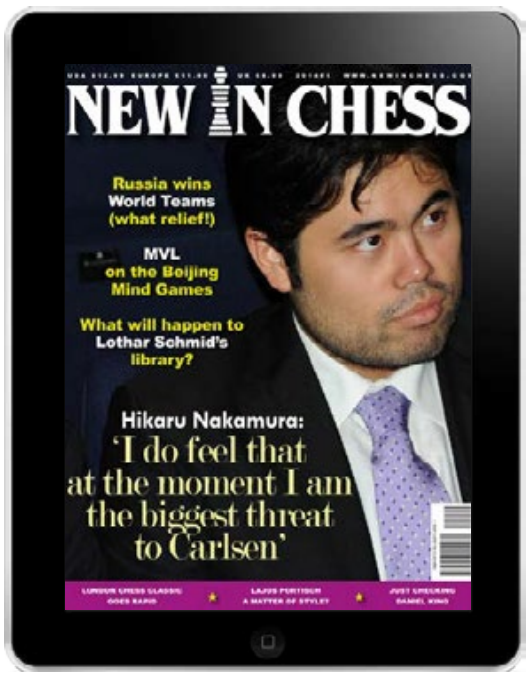
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